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16 PAGES
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PALESTINIAN WEEKLY

(USPS 696-630

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2025 I Street N.W.
Washington, D.C.
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NOVEMBER 16, 1984
VOL.V,NO.237

November 22 Proposed

Fatah Calls for 17th PNC in Amman

Fatah Revolutionary Council decided November 8 to convene the 17th Palestine National Council (PNC) session before the end of November. Khalil al-Wazir (Abu Jihad), a member of Fatah's Central Committee, announced in Amman the next day that the PNC session will be held in the Jordanian capital on November 22.

No other major PLO faction has agreed to Fatah's call but if Fatah can muster a two-thirds quorum of 254 PNC members it could go ahead with the meeting without the participation of other factions. The Democratic Alliance, which opposed the decision, presented a last-minute proposal to prevent the internal PLO controversy from escalating over the holding of the PNC in Amman.

Delegations from the Democratic Alliance and Fatah arrived in Tunis November 14 for a crucial meeting to discuss Fatah's call to convene the PNC in Amman and the reactivation of the various PLO institutions prior to convening the 17th PNC session, as agreed upon in the Aden-Algiers agreement.

The Aden-Algiers agreement was concluded between the Democratic Alliance and Fatah last April and June. It recommended various political and organisational reforms within the PLO ranks. The agreement also set September 15 as the deadline for completing national reconciliation talks and for convening the 17th PNC session.

A number of PNC members also arrived from Jordan to participate in the Tunis talks. Before leaving Amman for Tunis to participate in the talks with the Democratic Alliance, which were scheduled to start on November 15, Abu Jihad said it was still possible to postpone the 17th PNC if the two parties reach an agreement. The decision on the timing of the PNC was taken in an extraordinary meeting of the Fatah Revolutionary Council, the highest authority in the movement in the interim between two Fatah conferences. The council statement said that the convening of the PNC was "necessary to preserve the unity and independent decision of the PLO."

Fatah's unilateral step sparked immediate negative response from all factions in both the Democratic Alliance (DA) — made up of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (DFLP), the Palestinian Communist Party (PCP) and the Palestinian Liberation Front (PLF) — and the National Alliance (NA) — Fatah disidents, the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine—General Command (PFLP-GC), *Sa'iqa*, and the Popular Struggle Front (PSF). In separate statements issued in Damascus and Algiers, the two alliances described the call to convene the council in Amman as a call to split the PLO. They also called on Fatah to rescind its decision. In their statements, the PFLP and DFLP warned that convening the council in Amman would necessarily influence the content of PNC resolutions.

A number of PNC members in Jordan, Kuwait and Syria, including PNC speaker Khaled al-Fahoum, also expressed opposition to the step. In a statement issued in Jordan November 11, 37 PNC members (two more later signed, making it 39) residing in Jordan (including Isam Abd al-Hadi, the head of the Palestinian Women's Federation) called for a meeting of the PLO Executive Committee with all factions attending to discuss setting a date for the PNC session.

In his reply to a letter from PLO Chairman Yasir Arafat calling for the Amman meeting, al-Fahoum said it was customary to call the PNC to convene after a joint meeting between the PNC chairmanship, the PLO Executive Committee and the heads of the various factions. He explained that he would begin efforts to convene this meeting.

In Amman, efforts to convene the PNC were still going on, despite objections. Farouq Kaddoumi, member of the PLO Executive Committee and head of the PLO political department, and Salah Khalaf, a prominent member of the Fatah Central Committee, arrived in Jordan November 12 for the first time in 14 years since the 1970 massacres. They met with King Hussein and Prime Minister Ahmad Obeidat to discuss plans to hold the PNC. The two officials also held a press conference in the Jordanian capital and affirmed that the PNC session was going to be held in Amman and that Fatah could muster the two-thirds majority for a quorum. The quorum is 254 members out of the 384 total PNC membership. This excludes the 122 representatives of the PNC from the occupied territories who are barred from participation by the Israeli authorities.

In the occupied territories, residents were divided in their response to Fatah's call to convene the PNC November 22 in Jordan.

Elected Mayors Elias Freij of Bethlehem, Amin Nasser of Qalqilya and Hilmi Hanoun of Tulkarm, university councils, union federations and other national institutions expressed support for the call. The elected mayors of three major West Bank cities — Nablus Mayor Bassam Shaka'a, Karim Khalaf of Ramallah and Ibrahim Tawil of al-Bireh, and Walid Hamdallah of Anabta — signed a memorandum calling fo the postponement of the PNC and urging the PLO factions to resume national reconciliation talks on the basis of the Aden-Algiers agreement.

1-Day Strike Protests Soldiers in al-Aqsa

West Bank shops, schools and private institutions held a one-day general strike November 10 in response to a call by the Supreme Islamic Council to protest the continued presence of border guards inside al-Aqsa Mosque compound. All shops stayed shut throughout the day in East Jerusalem, Ramallah and Bethlehem but businesses in Nablus and Hebron were forced open at noon.

Sheikh Sa'ad al-Din, al-Alami head of the Islamic Council, told *Al Fajr* the strike apparently brought successful results. He said that the border guards have been confined to the gates around the compound and none of the Israeli guards has been seen on the Mosque premises since the strike. Over the past six months the Council had been asking that the Israeli border guards be removed from inside the Mosque area and stationed outside the gates of the Mosque. According to the council, the guards desecrated the holy place by harassing worshippers, especially women, and using profane language. The council also wants the picture of Israel's president and an Israeli flag removed from a police station within the Mosque compound. The council says that no state flags were in the police station even during Jordanian times.

The strike was accompanied by some demonstrating and stone throwing. At Dheisheh camp, near Bethlehem, residents stoned Rabbi Moshe Levinger and other settlers who have set up temporary housing in front of the Palestinian refugee camp, in an attempt to provoke and intimidate residents. Israel Radio reported that Levinger and his followers chased stone-throwers into the camp but were prevented by a further hail of stones from entering it. Soldiers intervened on behalf of the settlers and arrested some youths from the camp.

Al Fajr Arabic daily reported November 11 that students and residents of Jabal al-Mukaber, a neighbourhood of Jerusalem, stoned passing Israeli vehicles causing some damage. They also stoned a shop owned by an Israeli settler near the village. Palestinian flags were raised on electric poles in the area.

Similar stone-throwing incidents were reported in Bethlehem and Ramallah. Demonstrations in these two cities were dispersed by soldiers using tear gas.

Soldiers loitering outside the Dome of the Rock/AO photo

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Police inform unlicensed moneychanger of new regulations./AO photo

Unlicensed Moneychangers Closed, Others Restricted to Dinars

East Jerusalem moneychangers received orders November 12 from police commander of the southern district Avraham Turgeman ordering dealers not licensed before 1967 to close down by the 18th of this month and forcing the handful of licensed ones to deal only with the Jordanian dinar.

Moneychangers in operation before the Israeli occupation were licensed under Jordan and will remain open. Those who began operation after 1967 have neither been licensed by Israel nor the Jordanian government, and are thus forced to close.

The order left moneychangers worried that a wave of black market dealing will result, meaning unstable market prices of foreign currency. One moneychanger said the order "will not change anything other than the fact that illegal moneychangers will go underground."

The moneychangers were visited November 12 by police officers who asked them to sign a paper saying only those who have a license from Jordan prior to 1967 can continue operation. The paper also said the businessmen must exchange only dinars for customers carrying Jordanian passports. All other transactions with tourists must be handled at the bank. The non-licensed moneychangers, numbering about 10, will have to close down or otherwise face heavy punishment, including three years in jail or a IS2 million fine and the confiscation of the money being exchanged. The same punishment will be levied on licensed moneychangers who are caught dealing with foreign currency other than the dinar.

A non-licensed changer told *Al Fajr* he does not yet know what he plans to do but will wait till November 18 to see how the rest of the non-licensed moneychangers act. He predicted, though, that they will have to close and go into other lines of work.

One of the city's moneychangers in business for over 20 years blamed the government for the presence of non-licensed changers. He said the Israeli finance ministry, which is supposedly responsible for moneychangers, never checked those who were operating without a license. He added that the illegal changers paid income tax and the 15 percent value added tax without being questioned by the government.

Several licensed moneychangers did not see the move as anti-Palestinian but were under the impression that the clampdown is merely intended to cut down on illegal dealings with hard currency since the police action is equally applicable to anyone dealing illegally with foreign money in Israel as well. Some observers commented that the new order is an attempt by the government to stop any dealings with hard currency outside the banks.

The Jerusalem Post reported November 13 that the crackdown decision was taken by Jerusalem's Israeli mayor, Teddy Kollek, Attorney General Yitzhak Zamir and Turgeman. It said the government seemed to first want to close down all moneychangers but left the licensed ones open. However, the new order leaves the door open for the government to close down the licensed moneychangers in East Jerusalem in the future, said *The Post*.

West Bank moneychangers are allowed to transact in Jordanian dinars only. Many of the unlicensed ones have been told to close down their businesses. In Jericho, Tulkarm, Jenin and Hebron, moneychangers who have no permits were ordered to close down, while those with permits will trade only Jordanian dinars. They were also ordered to deposit all foreign currency they have in Israeli banks.

In Tulkarm, 17 shops were closed, leaving five operating. In Jenin, 10 moneychangers were ordered to shut down. Only five were allowed to continue in operation. In Hebron, moneychangers and jewellers were summoned to the military headquarters and informed that they cannot deal with hard currency any more. In the Gaza district, police raided moneychangers and arrested some.

As for the Palestinians residing in the West Bank, who are allowed to bring in up to US$5,000 through the bridges, they have to deposit their money in Israeli banks within two days of their entry into the country. They are exempted, however, from depositing the money if it is in dinars. The travellers will be allowed to keep only US$500 for pocket money. Those who fail to deposit the dollars in banks will have their money confiscated.

THIS WEEK'S CENSORSHIP

Following is a breakdown of censorship cuts for issue 237, November 16

Number of articles submitted to censor 11
Number of articles censored 4
Number of articles passed 7

Strike, Pressure Wins Back Arrested Amal Leaders

The arrest of four Amal leaders in occupied south Lebanon prompted a general strike November 12, the suspension of Lebanese-Israeli military talks on Israeli withdrawal from the country and a marked increase in armed resistance to the Israeli occupation. Three of the four were released after the strike.

The four leaders in the Lebanese Shi'ite Amal movement were arrested by the Israeli army November 8 on suspicion of leading armed resistance in south Lebanon. As a result, Nabih Berri, political head of Amal and the minister in charge of south Lebanon affairs in the Lebanese government, called for a general strike in south Lebanon November 12 and asked the government to suspend the second round of talks with Israel over its army's withdrawal from the south, which were to resume on the strike day. The first round was held November 9 between Israeli, Lebanese and United Nations officials at the southern Lebanese town of Naqoura.

The strike in the south was fully observed, even in non-Shi'ite villages, according to press reports. It was coupled with demonstrations, especially in the two major southern Lebanese towns of Sidon and Tyre where Israeli soldiers and their Lebanese surrogates, the South Lebanon Army (SLA), tried to interfere.

The suspension of Lebanese-Israeli military talks and the strike, in addition to US diplomatic moves in Israel, Lebanon and Syria, apparently led to the release of three of the arrested Amal leaders. The fourth man, Mahmoud Fakih, who is believed to be Amal's representative in the south, is still in detention. The release of the three men and visits by US Assistant Secretary of State Richard Murphy to Lebanon and Syria November 13 led to Lebanon's agreement to resume the suspended talks. The second round was eventually held at Naqoura November 15.

Women Political Prisoners Detained, Tried, Imprisoned

Ramallah military court sentenced Azzizah Saleh Karajeh, a 22-year-old law student in Damascus from Halhoul, to five months in prison and 18 months suspended November 11 on charges of membership in an illegal organisation. Azzizah's two sisters are also in detention and awaiting trial.

Yusra Karajeh, a teacher and a pregnant mother, was arrested on August 9, and sentenced to two years of which the 37 days spent in detention was considered active sentence. Khawla Karajeh, a high school student, was arrested August 12 and is scheduled for trial November 20. The sisters are detained at the Neve Tertza prison in Ramle.

Georgette Rishmawi, a student at Hebron University and resident of Beit Sahour, was arrested at the same time and faces the same charges November 20.

Fined for Illegal Literature

Another woman, Fatmeh Shehadeh Ja'afari, a 37-year-old Bethlehem resident, was sentenced November 12 by Ramallah military court on charges of carrying illegal literature. She was sentenced to six months suspended and a IS20,000 fine.

The literature Ja'afari was allegedly carrying consisted of 14 copies of *al Bayader al Siyasi* magazine and 33 copies of *al-Awdah* magazine. Both magazines are published in Jerusalem and are available in Jerusalem news stands.

Bethlehem's French Hospital In Financial Crisis

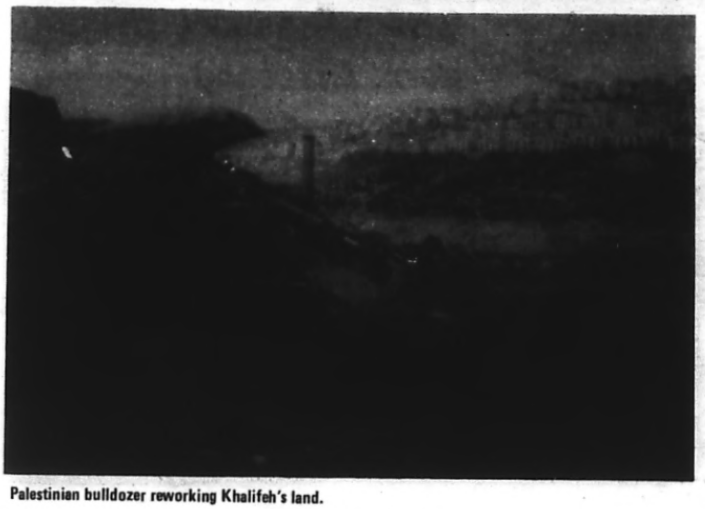
The 100-year-old French Hospital in Bethlehem may be forced to close for lack of funds. In the past year hospital officials closed down the maternity department, one of the few in the Bethlehem area, and reduced the number of beds from 120 to 34 because of financial difficulties. The administration is currently trying to raise funds to supplement the regular budget for major hospital improvements.

Dr Michel Dabdoub, medical director of the hospital, told *Al Fajr* that the hospital, which was built in 1889, is in need of major structural and interior renovations to be carried out over the next 10 years at a cost of US$2.5 million.

Dabdoub said that while the financial crisis has not affected the hospital's high medical standards it has restricted its role in the community which enabled it to treat needy patients without charge. He said that one fund-raising scheme calls for individual donations of JD20-30 to pay for one day's stay in a hospital bed. Dabdoub hopes that the hospital can eventually maintain 10-15 beds daily for social welfare cases.

The French Hospital is supported by the Paris-based Sisters of Charity, small grants from the French government and donations.

A delegation of the Sisters of Charity is expected to visit the hospital in the next month to study the hospital's needs.



Palestinian bulldozer reworking Khalifeh's land.

Farmer Uses Bulldozer To Fight Settlers' Land Grab

A bulldozer battle erupted between a Palestinian landowner and Israeli settlers on privately-owned land next to the giant city-settlement of Givat Zeev northwest of Jerusalem. The Palestinian farmer, Abdullah Suleiman Khalifeh from the village of Jib, is attempting to physically liberate his seven-dunum plot from settlers' hands. The land was planted with olive tree seedlings four years ago.

Khalifeh who supports a 10-member family explained that until this year his land also yielded a crop of 3,600 pounds of wheat yearly.

On August 3 bulldozers belonging to a private Israeli construction company opened a road through the middle of Khalifeh's property, uprooting 40 seedlings in the process. Workers for the Israeli company Karnei Shamron, which advertises materials and labour for "build your own home" settlement projects, also built retaining walls along the new road.

Khalifeh, as many Palestinians have been forced to do in the face of illegal settler land grabs, consulted a lawyer, who checked on the company's claim that it could work on the land. After discovering that the Israeli company's action was illegal, Khalifeh was advised to repair his land. His lawyer told him it would take a long time, with possibly negative results, to go through the courts and even longer to get the police to act on any court decision.

Khalifeh rented a bulldozer owned by a Ramallah company and began reworking his land November 6. The following day the Israeli company's advocate came to the Palestinian landowner's attorney, asking that the bulldozer be halted. An agreement was reached that for one week the settlers' right of way be guaranteed, provided they present ownership documents and don't interfere with the Palestinian bulldozer's work.

But the Israeli company broke the agreement. On November 12 Israeli bulldozers dumped a mountain of white sand on the area where the Palestinian bulldozer had destroyed a retaining wall.

Jonathan Kuttab, attorney for Khalifeh, told *Al Fajr* that with the settlers' latest action he plans to sue the Israeli company for criminal trespassing and will ask for full compensation. Kuttab said that his client will continue to work on his land, fence it and plant it.

Asked by a foreign journalist how he felt as bulldozers were replowing his plot, he said, "I feel that I am liberating my land."

Khalifeh's novel means of fighting back has had a dramatically positive effect on the morale of Jib residents. He said a number of landowners who are in his predicament plan to follow his example and fight to liberate their lands.

Khalifeh's wife said her husband has been offered on numerous occasions as much as JD40,000 to sell his land. But he continuously refused the land brokers' offers.

Givat Zeev is a strategically located settlement, within easy travelling distance of Jerusalem and Tel Aviv. According to settlement officials, the 800 apartments in the settlement were sold before they were even completed.

The road bulldozed through Khalifeh's land leads to a set of land plots which have been purchased by influential and affluent Israelis. The area is planned for expensive, individual villas going up next door to the settlement.

Palestinian residents of the nearby Jib village have lost more than half of their property to the settlements of Givat Zeev and Mahane Givon.

Jnaid Prison Improvements Called Insufficient

Jnaid prison officials in Nablus are slowly implementing the promises of improved conditions made by the Israeli police minister to Palestinian political prisoners last month, according to the prisoners' lawyers. Over 700 prisoners at the newly opened central prison went on a 10-day hunger strike in October to protest draconian conditions. Prisoner Jibrin Rajoub, a member of the prisoners committee, told lawyer Jawad Bulous, November 8 that the prisoners believe, however, that their list of demands given to authorities on September 23 constitutes only a minimum of needed improvement.

Prison authorities have allowed prisoners to buy transistor radios, allowed families to provide prisoners with pyjamas, added new wash basins and toilets, partly alleviated overcrowded conditions by moving prisoners, allowed Arab physicians to treat prisoners, and made plans to build an additional courtyard, sewing room, library and barber shop.

Rajoub told advocate Bulous that prisoners are still demanding a definite reply concerning the following demands:

* Solving the problem of overcrowding in accordance with international standards;
* Solving the health problem completely;
* Adjusting the regulation of movement between the various prison sections; and
* Ending physical assaults on prisoners.

Prisoners also sent messages of gratitude to individuals and institutions who supported them during their hunger strike last month. (Translation: Al Sha'ab, November 12, 1984)

Army Seals Dheisheh Camp As 'Closed Military Area'

Israeli occupation authorities declared Dheisheh refugee camp a closed military area as of November 13.

The order forbids anyone except residents from entering Dheisheh, including press and health personnel. The Israeli army issued the order following a 24-hour curfew imposed because an Israeli soldier guarding settler militant Rabbi Moshe Levinger was hit by rocks thrown from inside the camp. According to Dheisheh residents, Levinger, who has been camping out across the road from the camp, was trying to enter Dheisheh when the soldier was hit.

Checkposts were set up behind the camp and at the camp's only entrance remaining open on the main Jerusalem-Hebron highway to enforce the order.

The Israeli military spokesperson's office told *Al Fajr* the order was intended "mainly to calm down the area there." The official refused to specify the cause of the "disturbance." Dheisheh residents say that they consider Levinger's stakeout in front of their camp, which has so far lasted two weeks, to be provocative. They reported that Levinger attempted several times to enter the camp under military protection, thereby aggravating the situation.

Levinger, one of the founders of the right-wing Gush Emunim settlement movement, reportedly is so anxious to set foot in the camp that he conned an elderly Dheisheh resident — whom his sons describe as "an alcoholic" and "irresponsible for his acts" — into signing an agreement to rent his house to Levinger. Since camp refugees do not have ownership rights to the shacks they dwell in, the old man's wife and sons declared the contract null and void.

In a related story, Israeli border guards entered an UNRWA-run boys' school in Dheisheh November 12, charging that stones had been thrown at passing vehicles from inside the school. *Al Sha'ab* Arabic daily reported November 13 that the Bethlehem district military governor supervised the raid. Border guards questioned Mohammed Izzeh, a teacher from the school, after he protested the act.

Israeli settlers, especially from Kiryat Arba and Gush Etzion settlement, have stepped up their harassment of Dheisheh, which houses about 10,000 refugees. Dheisheh residents fear the settlers intend to force them off the land and build a settlement there. Residents believe the military government may give in to settlers' demands and pressure them through curfew and other measures to leave the camp. The military order closing the camp is thought to be part of the plan. Dheisheh residents say the order is designed to further harass them.

Solidarity Group Documents Harassment of Dheisheh

An eight-year-old boy from Dheisheh refugee camp, Maher Qassas, spoke to an audience of journalists at Beit Agron in West Jerusalem November 12 about how he was beaten on his genitals by Jewish settlers and soldiers. Maher was then hospitalised. He spoke also of the bad treatment he received while being held in Bethlehem jail.

Qassas was speaking at a press conference in West Jerusalem organised by the Committee to Defend Palestinian Refugee Camps. The Committee said the press conference was intended to draw the attention of the UN secretary-general and other international human rights organisations to the difficult conditions imposed by Israel on Dheisheh camp. Members of the committee said the camp has been undergoing continuous harassment, intimidation and violence by settlers. The camp also has been placed under curfew a number of times for several days in a row, the committee said.

Hassan Abd al-Jawad, a journalist who frequently covers events at the camp from his post in the Bethlehem Press Office, compared the situation at Dheisheh with the Jewish ghettos during Nazi Germany. He said the military government has been cooperating with settlers in subduing camp residents. He said the military bowed to pressure by settlers to close the camp's entrances and arrest residents without reason, in order to intimidate them.

Other speakers at the conference included a woman who told how settlers broke into her house and threw her to the ground while she was in her ninth month of pregnancy. A Bethlehem University student, Burhan Attallah, spoke also of his prison conditions, which included beatings, he said.

Attorney Mohammed Na'amneh, speaking on behalf of the committee, demanded that all measures against the camp and its residents be lifted and the settlers and soldiers be withdrawn from the area surrounding the camp.

Professor Mordechai Abu Shaul, a member of the Committee for Solidarity with Bir Zeit University, also spoke at the conference, asking that all repressive measures against the camp be exposed. Lawyer Felicia Langer urged at the conclusion of the conference that all democratic and progressive forces in Israel stand behind Dheisheh camp in its struggle against repression.

The Committee for the Defence of the Refugee Camps distributed a leaflet at the conference condemning all measures against the refugees. The statement criticised the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) for not doing anything to increase its aid to the refugees.

ISRAELI EXPULSION CAMPAIGN UNDERWAY

40 More Farmland Homes Destroyed in Jiftlik

by Sami Aboudi

Israeli military authorities demolished 40 shacks November 11 belonging to migrant farmers and their families, escalating efforts to dislodge Palestinian farmers from the agriculturally rich Jiftlik Valley. The farmers built the shacks 10 years ago as temporary residences on their land during planting season. Thirty-three temporary homes had been bulldozed in a similar raid 10 days earlier.

Jiftlik farmers reported that like the previous operation, the demolition took the form of a full-scale military operation, involving more than 300 soldiers. Soldiers arrived early in the morning and used roadblocks to close off the area to outsiders. Another group of soldiers worked the bulldozers and began destroying homes without warning. Some farmers were unable to salvage their belongings before bulldozers tore into the shacks. The 73 homeless farmers and their families are refusing to leave the area, where they sleep in the open air without shelter. "In the evening we unroll our mattresses and sleep outside and roll them back up in the morning," Ahmad Abdullah, 54, a farmer from Tubas, told *Al Fajr*. "We cannot move away because we would lose our crops," he added. The farmers are planting winter crops of eggplant, squash, cucumbers and tomatoes.

Farmers also argue that daily transport for their families from their home village 40 kilometres away is very costly. The labour of the entire family is needed in the fields. Farmers also say that frequent security manoeuvres in the area, like roadblocks and travel restrictions, may prevent or delay access to their fields, which harms the crops. Farmers say their agricultural methods require round-the-clock supervision. "Vegetables require early morning or late evening irrigation and pesticide spraying," explained Ibrahim Mattar, an agricultural engineer. In order to produce good crops, farmers must remain on their land all the time.

After the demolition, Israeli soldiers remained on guard to prevent farmers from rebuilding the shacks. Soldiers threatened farmers to try to coerce them into returning to their home villages.

During the winter vegetable growing season between September and May, 700 families from Tubas and Tammoun villages in the Jenin area migrate to the Jiftlik Valley to farm land leased from Nablus and Jericho landowners. Entire families work in the fields and younger children go to Jiftlik schools four kilometres away.

The rest of Jiftlik's population are former residents of al-Ajajreh and al-Makhrouq refugee camps and al-Hariyeh village in the Jordan Valley, which were destroyed by the Israeli occupation army in August 1967. The settlement of Massu'a was built on the site of al-Ajajreh camp. The 2-3000 refugees originally came from the Jaffa and Bir Saba'a areas before being expelled in the 1948 war.

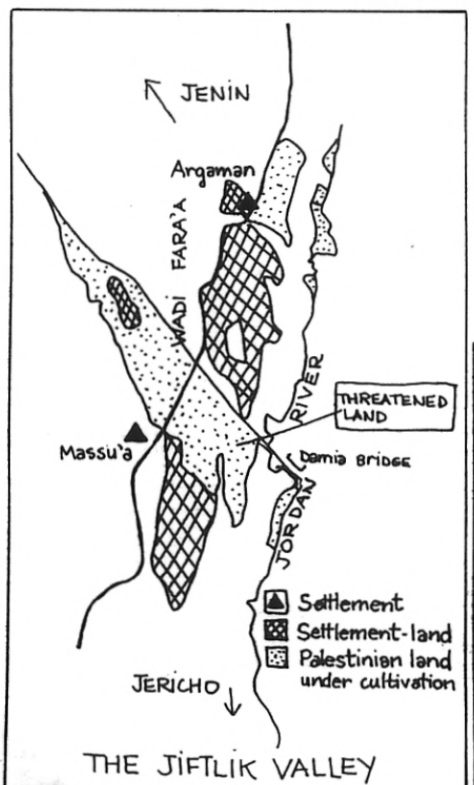
Jiftlik farmers built their shacks in the early 1970's on land called "Bayader," which they set aside for houses. Majed Mfadi Ahmad, 55, a farmer who leases 200 dunums from Nablus landowners, said that the farmers were forced to move the shacks to the present location in 1979, after the military authorities issued an order prohibiting farmers from sleeping east of a road located within a wide military security zone along the Jordan River. Ahmad said that top Israeli officers, including colonel Harari, still the advisor to the coordinator of activities in the West Bank, told them at the time that they could live in that area.

The current campaign of house demolitions followed several verbal warnings from the Israeli authorities to farmers to move out of the area. Hundreds of farmers, whose own ancestral land was confiscated in successive land grabs by Israeli settlements in the Jordan Valley region, were first served with orders in September to demolish their shacks. The orders claimed that the shacks were built on government property. When farmers confronted the Israelis with land deeds, they said that the orders were issued incorrectly and that the real reason for the order was that shacks were built without licenses.

Ramallah attorney Raja Shehadeh, who is representing the farmers, told *Al Fajr* that the shacks were built a long time ago, some more than 11 years ago, with the full consent of the Israeli authorities. He explained that farmers moved their residence from another area to comply with the Israeli designation of the area as a security zone. He charged that the Israelis are using the license pretext to justify the eviction of farmers. "Why do they ignore illegal construction on land owned by Bir Zeit University when we have made several complaints about that and yet act against poor farmers who do not own permanent houses?" he asked. Shehadeh also said international regulations require the occupying power to protect residents under occupation and not to work against their interest.

The demolition measure, according to farmers, eases Israeli takeover of the rich agricultural land. The 15,000 dunums which produce about 50 percent of the winter vegetables grown in the entire Jordan Valley area, the breadbasket of the West Bank, are the real focus of Israeli attention. Settlers from the nearby Massu'a settlement are openly envious of the rich Arab-owned land. Journalist Roni Ben Efrat from the leftist *Derech HaNitzotz* monthly interviewed Massu'a settlers last week and was told the settlers look forward to controlling the Arab land. The area is located within the Allon Plan.

The Allon Plan calls for establishing a 'security zone' of permanent settlements in the Jordan Valley area, which would be retained by Israel in the case of Israeli withdrawal from the West Bank. Farmers and agriculture experts agree that the method the Israelis are using to transfer control of the land is to force them to stop planting the land. The decision to dislodge farmers from the area is the first step towards this end.



FOUR NEW SETTLEMENTS

Rabin Inaugurates Jordan Valley Colony

Israeli Defence Minister Yitzhak Rabin personally presided over a chorus of *Nahal* (paramilitary cadet youth corps) settlers to inaugurate four new settlements this week built on confiscated Arab land, described by *The Jerusalem Post* as "barren." Two of the settlements are in the West Bank — one in the Jordan Valley and one in the Gush Etzion bloc — and two in the Naqab.

In his speech at the ceremony November 12 dedicating the settlement of Rotem in the Jordan Valley, Rabin said the settlements were "a practical application of the Jewish people's return to the land of Israel." Rabin also claimed that the new settlements were not indicative of any new Labour policy but were old sites that had been "in the pipeline." All four settlements were populated four months ago, before the Israeli elections.

Rotem, built on land seized from the village of Tubas, completes a string of Labour Party settlements along the Jordan River. Part of the Allon Plan, the settlement string is intended, according to Palestinian settlement expert Ibrahim Matar, to "create a barrier between the populated areas of the West and East Banks, cutting off the West Bank population from physical contact with East Jordan and at the same time to surround the Palestinian population in the highlands of the West Bank with Israeli settlers."

The settlement of Gevaot in the Gush Etzion bloc was also inaugurated the same day. Along with Rotem, according to a *Post* report November 13, Gevaot is to be part of Israel's 'line of defence' in the east. The Gush Etzion bloc was built, according to Matar, to divide the Palestinian cities of Bethlehem and Hebron.

The two Naqab settlements were inaugurated November 13. One, the settlement of Amitai, is 1.5 kilometres from the Egyptian border. The other, Ye'elon, is 20 kilometres north of Kibbutz Yotvata.

The Dawn

AL FAJR

AL FAJR – Jerusalem Palestinian Weekly

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Al Fajr was founded in 1972 by Yusef Nasr, who edited the paper until his kidnapping in 1974. The English edition was first published in April 1980. **The Dawn (Al Fajr) Jerusalem Palestinian Weekly (UPS 686630)** is published weekly for $50.00 per year by Paul Ajlouny, 16 Crowell St., Hempstead. N.Y. 11550. Second class postage paid at Hempstead, N.Y.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Al Fajr 2025 I Street, N.W., Suite 925, Washington D.C., 20006.

Jiftlik Exposes Hypocrisy

Palestinian farming has been and continues to be the area hardest hit by the Israeli occupation.

Palestinian land has been the target of massive Israeli expropriation. Land has been taken for different reasons: some for military use, some for settlements and other large strips for areas simply declared 'state land.'

Palestinians while farming still smaller and smaller strips of land have also been faced with many other problems, from water shortage to lack of an export market.

However, the latest blow to Palestinian farmers, particularly those in the Jiftlik Valley, poses perhaps one of the most dangerous threats of the Israeli occupation. The Jiftlik area in the Jordan Valley is one of the most productive farm belts in the West Bank. It is estimated that Jiftlik produces 50 percent of the Palestinian winter crop. Experts calculate that it brings in about 15 percent of the West Bank's GNP.

Unlike many other West Bank lands, the Jiftlik area is properly surveyed and its owners have completely unchallenged ownership papers. Yet, the landowners are unable to build homes near their land so rather than farm from a distance, they lease it to farmers who migrate from the northern West Bank for nine months a year to live in make-shift shelters and till the land.

Since 1980, Israeli authorities have been harassing the farmers, first by forcing them to live in only one specified area and most lately by simply destroying their shacks.

Farmers who must till the land, with their families, from early in the mornings to late in the afternoons are caught in a bind. Their presence near the land is essential. Otherwise the land is left unattended, leaving authorities with the chance to grab it and the crops the likely possibility of spoilage.

While Israeli officials and American businessmen speak of the need to improve the quality of life for Palestinians, our most valued possession – land – continues to be taken away. The case of the Jiftlik farmers exposes the hypocrisy of Israeli and American officials who speak of life improvement while denying basic rights. We, as Palestinians, don't want Israeli and American "good gestures." We want instead to be left alone to not only farm our own lands but to determine our own future.

AL FAJR – Jerusalem Palestinian Weekly

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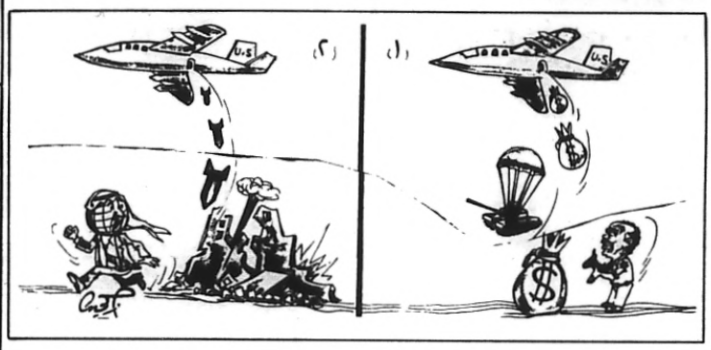

US Elections Spell No Change for Arabs

by Ghassan Bishara
Our Washington, DC Correspondent

Before this week's American elections, many on both sides of the Middle East conflict were asking the same questions: who will win and what effects, if any will the results have on the Palestinian-Israeli conflict? The answers were, of course simple: Reagan would win a second term and 'no,' it wouldn't make any difference to Palestinians and other Arabs.

The outcome of the contest between Reagan, the incumbent Republican and Mondale the Democratic challenger, was never seriously in question. Reagan to most of America, is a popular president. His economics have benefitted many Americans, but certainly not all. Despite data supplied every day of the campaign to the American public by the opposition proving Reagan's failures his popularity was constantly on the increase

The budget deficit under Reagan not only didn't decrease as he promised during his campaign for election the first time around but has increased. The situation between the two superpowers has also reached a new low Yet, the American public, feels good about the president. Reagan's win was predicted to be very big, capturing, according to most polls up to 48 states.

Some minorities in the United States benefit from presidential elections because of promises made to them by candidates of the two parties. In return for those promises, the candidates receive political and monetary support from members of those communities. This applies to minorities such as the Jewish community but not of course, to the Arab American community.

Because of its relatively small size, lack of cohesiveness and political apathy in the context of American politics, the Arab community is paid less attention than many other communities. The factor most responsible, however, for the untouchable status of the Arab community is the American pro-Israeli group. The latter's power and its effectiveness on the political scene adds to other reasons which make for neglect of the Arab community in the American political scene. Although many minorities in the US have been making themselves into a power capable of delivering political goodies,' the Arab community's attempt to enter American politics has not taken off. Five thousand dollars were returned to five different Arab Chicagoans from the Mondale-Ferraro campaign, for fear of upsetting the real power house in the US, the pro-Israeli lobby.

When the time comes for different communities to collect on the promises made in the campaign, the Arab community finds that issues of importance to it not only remain unaddressed, but take a giant step backward. This accounts for the situation in the Middle East being what it is from the Arab perspective. The last elections were no different, says Mohammed Hallaj, editor of *Palestine Perspective* in Washington. "I don't see any significant or meaningful impact," which would result in changing US policy in the Middle East , he said. This would have been true, he said even if Mondale had won. "The American commitment to the ongoing policy in the Middle East is a bipartisan commitment. ' It is so, he argues, because of domestic politics and "a conception of American national interest," that despite differences in all other regions "there is no difference when it comes to the Middle East. '

Not only does the support for Israel increase during election years, but also progress, if any, towards an acceptable solution to the region's conflict is slowed down. Election time, said Hallaj, "is a season to revitalise and strengthen the old commitments and to add new ones" for Israel. In this election Israel gained new and important promises such as a free trade agreement which will benefit Israel; American assistance in completing the Israeli Lavi fighter and more. All of this, of course, makes Israel more intransigent and less likely to accept a compromise solution.

Hallaj disagrees with the common Arab assumption that a second-term Reagan will pressure Israel in favour of a solution, and that election time is a time of paralysis in US Middle East policy. Hallaj, who was Bir Zeit University vice-president for academic affairs, argues that election time "is the hunting season " the fruits of which are harvested later. Hallaj said Reagan will not pressure Israel in a second term. A change will occur, he said, only if the Arab states act on their "sympathies" for the Palestinian Arab people.

What the Arab states could have done in this election year, or could do in regular years, in order to bring about a change in US policy regarding the Middle East is to nullify Israel's claim that it is the only power in the region capable of being helpful to US interests. Reagan administration officials, said Hallaj, rightly or wrongly are convinced Israel "is a valuable ally" in the Middle East. "So what is needed for the Arabs," he said, "is to demonstrate, not by talking, to the US that Israel is not much of a factor as a regional power, by simply rectifying the imbalance" of power in their favour. This will convince the US that Israel "is not that essential to America's well-being" in the Middle East.

The prospects that no change will take place in US policy in the Middle East are good mainly because the Arab side has been unwilling to take necessary steps with America, and signs refute the likelihood that they may do so in the future. For the Arabs, with or without an election, American policy stays the same.

AL FAJR invites our readers to contribute letters, articles and opinions. Contributions must be signed, but names may be withheld upon request.

Terrorist Infrastructure in the Israeli Government

by Nahum Barnea

A pro-Jewish terrorism lobby was recently established in the Knesset. It is something of a first, numbering approximately 20 MKs and extending from the back benches of the Liberal Party to the four representatives of Shas (Sephardi Tora Guardians). Aryeh Nahamkin, a junior minister in the national unity government, appears to be quite partial to the lobby but as yet is the only Labour Alignment representative to have flirted with Jewish terrorism. His behaviour, like that of many other members of the lobby, has been characterised thus far by a certain lack of seriousness. Some of them are frustrated after having missed out on a cabinet portfolio during the grand sale that preceded the formation of the national unity government; others simply want a place in the limelight or an opportunity to settle old scores. Many of them have gone along for the ride with little thought about their eventual destination.

As Arab terrorist attacks precipitate Jewish terrorist attacks, terrorism is slowly becoming part of our everyday experience. The state of Israel has witnessed both Jewish and Arab undergrounds in the past but they were never granted any legitimacy in Israeli society and were thus easily crushed. Today, however, the problem is not confined to the terrorists themselves; it takes in all those who sympathise with Jewish terrorism in the Knesset, the government and the defence establishment.

Suspect in the Jewish terrorist underground case on special leave from prison to attend his sister's wedding in Hebron: *Sympathisers of the Jewish underground in the Knesset, the government and the defence establishment.*

Inquiry Without Action

Consider the following: over half a year ago — in April 1984, to be precise — two men were killed after they had been taken off an Egged bus near Deir al-Balah in the Gaza Strip. Public pressure forced the defence minister at the time, Moshe Arens, to set up a commission of inquiry into their deaths. The commission's findings, presented at the end of May, implicated at least one senior Israeli army officer. The police initiated an investigation which was completed in June and turned the file over to the government's legal advisor, whose job was to decide whether or not to prosecute the officer and other persons involved in the death of the two men. Four months have elapsed since then and the legal advisor has not yet read the file.

> "WHEN THE MURDERER OF A PRISONER OF WAR MANAGES TO MAKE A CAREER IN THE ARMY, IT'S HARD TO EDUCATE SOLDIERS WITH THE IDEA THAT THE LAW CANNOT BE CIRCUMVENTED..."

The state's attorney, Yona Blatman, is heading the committee whose task it is to determine whether to press charges or not. The ministry of justice claims that the committee is hard at work but one needs a great deal of good faith to accept this statement at face value: (far more complicated cases have been wrapped up in less than six months). In the meantime, the officer in question has remained at his post, where he is constantly called upon to make life and death decisions. The army chief of staff, Moshe Levy, has seen fit to refrain from suspending him from active duty.

Approached from another angle, one must take into account that for the past six months the army and many non-military people have known that the reputation of this officer has been tarnished. He claims that he is innocent but cannot substantiate his version of the events because, for one, the censors have deligently removed his name from anything that may associate him with the events at Deir al-Balah. Obviously, the state's attorney's office is worried about the possible political ramifications of its decision and seems to prefer to make no decision at all.

Promoted For Murder

The case of Aryeh Sadeh is equally scandalous. Sadeh is the officer who gave the order to execute a Palestinian who was taken prisoner during the 1978 Litani Operation. The order being illegal, Sadeh was brought before a military court and sentenced to five years in prison and a demotion to the rank of private. But Raphael Eitan, the chief of staff at the time, reduced Sadeh's sentence by half and moved him up to the rank of major. All and all, Sadeh did not spend more than a few months in jail and during the period that he was behind bars, enjoyed special privileges. Moreover, Sadeh received the support of a political lobby which included Likud MK Yigal Cohen, Amos Hadar of the Labour Alignment and songwriter Naomi Shemer. Shemer's husband wanted to set up an organisation to aid the victims of terrorism and which would campaign to make the slaying of terrorists perfectly legal.

When Sadeh was released from prison, Eitan reinstated him in the rank of lieutenant colonel. Sadeh returned to the army, received a top post and even moved up in rank. Today he is a ful-fledged colonel but he is not the only army executioner whose military career prospered in the wake of the Litani Operation.

The inexcusable norms that were established during Eitan's tenure as chief of staff have remained. When the murderer of a prisoner of war manages to make a career in the army, it's hard to educate soldiers with the idea that the law cannot be circumvented and that commands must be carried out. The only real difference between the present army chief of staff, Moshe Levy, and his predecessor lies in their respective styles: Levy has toned down Eitan's bluster but has not deviated from Eitan's policies.

Likewise, the trial of the Jewish terrorist underground is nothing short of scandalous. Conducted in a jovial mood, the general feeling is that the fate of the defendants will be decided in the backrooms of Israeli politics rather than in court. The replacement of Burg by Bar Lev as the minister of police — albeit, a welcome event — has yet to be translated into concrete acts in regard to the treatment the terrorists of the Jewish underground enjoy in prison. Unfortunately, the framework of the national unity government limits the ability of the government to adopt the correct policy to the political front which has lent its support to the budding Jewish underground but the police minister does have a free hand when it comes to upholding the law in connection with the members of the underground.

Provocative Hikes?

The new tolerance for terrorism in Israel is not the preserve of the far right; it encompasses the sleepwalkers of the left as well. After the murder of the student couple beside the Cremisan Monastery just outside of Bethlehem — a despicable murder by any human standard — a group calling itself "The Committee for Solidarity with Bir Zeit Univesity" issued the following statement: "The deeply regrets the death of these two young people and calls on Israeli nature buffs to refrain from hiking in the occupied territories; these territories are not theirs. These two young people should be considered the sacrificial victims of the Israeli occupation, who were duped by the government or the settlers." Now this announcement is so ridiculous that it is hard to argue with it in a matter-of-fact way. If this group cannot condemn an act of murder, it ought to simply shut up; no one asked them to express their condolences. As regards the question over whether or not to hike in the occupied territories, I personally am in favour of it but recognise that the topic is open to debate. However, this was not the right time to launch such a debate.

All and all, this committee, which is so sensitive when it comes to Bir Zeit University, has lost its right to demand that the public pay heed to its case for human rights. They are no better than Rabbi Druckman.

A Hebrew translation of Dennis MacSmith's biography of Mussolini has just been published and it will probably prove to be shocking reading for many Israeli readers, for a number of reasons; I will confine myself to MacSmith's description of the light-headedness and equanimity with which the political establishment viewed the rise of political terrorism in Italy. Like all the Goldsteins and Nahamkins in Israel's terrorist lobby, the members of the two large centrist parties in Italy believed that the Fascist Party's terrorism would play into their hands. But in the end, they dug their own graves. (Translation: Koterit Rashit, October 31, 1984).

African Immigrants to Palestine: Part of the Palestinian Whole

How a national community treats its immigrant populations is indicative of the principles that guide its national movement. Awad Abdel Fattah visited the three-generation-old African Muslim community in Jerusalem's Old City and found that they have become accepted, without discrimination, by Palestinian brothers and sisters.

"The fact that a number of people of our community have paid the most precious price for the cause of the Palestinian people means that we feel strongly we are Arab Palestinians." **/AO photo**

Among the many Muslim Africans who made pilgrimages to Jerusalem's al-Aqsa Mosque over the centuries were a few who settled in the Old City to be physically close to one of the most revered spiritual centres in Islam. This migration process began at the end of Ottoman rule and continued until African pilgrims became an established and distinct community in Palestine like other originally non-Palestinian groups.

Although they have, over the years, chosen to live together in the same area, African immigrants are well integrated into the rest of the Palestinian society in the city, facing the same concerns, problems, and fate. Except for elderly members of the community, they have broken their connections with Africa. They identify themselves as Palestinian Arabs and are full members of the larger community. Their sons and daughters are educated in Palestinian schools and are active in the sports clubs of the city. Their darker skin colouring has not made them targets of racism, as they might have experienced in South Africa or the United States. Native Palestinians have dealt with this community like any other Palestinian sector. "Our education," said one Jerusalemite who traces his own family's presence in the city back hundreds of years, "does not teach us to distinguish on the basis of colour, but on faith and honesty."

History

The 300 Africans who live in the Old City originally came from Sudan, Chad, Senegal, Nigeria and other Muslim African countries. Of course, only the eldest generation was born in Africa; the young and adults who constitute the majority were born in Palestine and never saw the countries of their fathers and grandfathers. The emigration of the Africans began last century and ended in 1948. The sole motive for their settlement in Palestine was their feeling for the holy city. Speaking in faulty Arabic, Abu Ibrahim, an old man from Nigeria, explained, "I wanted to accomplish my religious duty here and I liked the place, so I stayed." He added that he and others who finally settled in Jerusalem first made the *haj* to Mecca and then came to Palestine. Other old people refused to talk to *Al Fajr* because of an article written in one of the local papers.

The community has gradually integrated into the social and spiritual life of the city until they have become an indistinguishable part of it. They have shared with the rest of the population its problems and suffering and experienced the tragedy resulting from the continued occupation of Palestine. Some even joined in the resistance waged by the Palestinians against the British mandate and Israeli occupation authorities. Among those imprisoned for their resistance activities was Fatma Barnawi, the first woman political prisoner after the 1967 war. Many among the African community were forced out of Palestine, along with hundreds of thousands of other Palestinians, and into other Arab countries during the 1948 and 1967 wars.

According to Husni Shahin, a member of the African community and a researcher in the Islamic Heritage Preservation Centre, the Africans came in three waves: the first one at the end of Ottoman rule, the second in 1935 and the third in 1948.

Shahin, who has recently completed a short study on the African community, explained that these Africans are descendant from Arab tribes who spoke Arabic but much different dialects. He said that many have married Palestinian women and that Arabic has become their native language.

Living In A Former Prison

What was once a prison is now a tiny neighbourhood for the African community. Two old Turkish jails line the street of Ala'a al-Din, which leads into the al-Aqsa compound and the Dome of the Rock. The buildings were set up by the Mameluk dynasty for religious seminars. Historical testimony, such as inscriptions and decorative carvings, were removed from other structures and reused on the outside walls. When the Ottoman Turks occupied Jerusalem, they converted the rooms into prisons. One was used for prisoners awaiting execution, called *Habs al-Damm* (Blood Prison), and the other for less serious offenders, called *Habs al-Rabat* (Holding Prison).

During the British mandate, the building were no longer used as prisons. Then the Africans who were living in other parts of the Old City — most worked as guards in al-Aqsa Mosque — moved into the vacant place with the help of the Islamic *waqf*, which was in charge of the holy places. Each family built a hut in the inner courtyard of the prisons and over time the huts were replaced by concrete houses covered in stucco. Among the houses are narrow, interconnected lanes, as if a small village has been carved out of the Old City.

Little has changed in their economic and housing conditions. With regard to the housing, the courtyard area is crowded with six to seven people living in each of the two-room houses. The houses belong to the Islamic *waqf* administration, to which the African community pays nominal rent. Despite the obvious meticulous care taken by the inhabitants, most of the houses are not fit for living in. Some leak in the winter and become damp. Running water was extended to the houses only in the last six years. Water had to be fetched in buckets from a water point installed outside the courtyards. "The municipality," said Mousa Ghuz, a university student, "has neglected us like they have the rest of the Palestinian population of the Old City, on a discriminatory and racist basis." Another member of the community remarked that the facts speak for themselves: one need only look at the millions of dollars spent on building the nearby Jewish neighbourhood which was implanted in the heart of the Old City.

Such miserable housing and economic conditions have had direct effects on the level of education of the community. The majority of the adults are workers but in the past few years the number of students at higher educational institutions has been increasing. Hussein Belale, a second-year engineering student in Jerusalem's British Technological Institute, told *Al Fajr* that the young generation is challenging the difficult conditions under which they are living and pushing their way ahead: "Although I am living in unfit housing and privacy is very limited here, I work hard to achieve my aspirations for the future." He added that their desperate economic condition does not allow them to move to better housing outside the Old City, where conditions go from bad to worse under Israeli occupation.

The children of the community are studying in the existing elementary and primary Palestinian schools; the community never felt the necessity to have a separate school. Even the African language which community heads still use between each other has not been passed to the second generation, which was born and grew up in Palestinian Jerusalem. Apparently the environment in which the community lives has been a stronger cultural influence than any other. The young generation believe that the African languages will die out with the death of the last old man in the community.

In the early years of their presence in Jerusalem the Africans, who still at that time felt new to the life of the Old

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Political Prisoners from the African Palestinian Community

Fatma Barnawi — 1967 to 1979 (released in prisoner exchange)
Mahmoud Adam Jadda — 25 years
Ali Mohammed Jadda — 15 years.

The African community lives in two former Turkish jails in overcrowded and delapidated housing: *"The municipality has neglected us."* **/AO photo**

Greek Orthodox Church Moves to Evict Refugees in Bir Zeit Town

Fifteen Palestinian refugee families are struggling to keep their tiny refugee camp in Bir Zeit on land where the Greek Orthodox community wants to build a church. **Maher AbuKhater** reports on the 34-year-old contest of wills, which is now in court.

"They want to evict poor people from their homes and leave them without shelter in order to build a church," one churchgoer sarcastically observed. "How could God give his blessings to such a church?"

The "poor people" referred to are several Palestinian refugee families living in the town of Bir Zeit.

these families are now victims of another attempt, this time by the Greek Orthodox Patriarch, to evict them from their homes of refuge.

The latest eviction process began last April when the Greek Orthodox Patriarch in Jerusalem filed suit in Ramallah court demanding the eviction of six refugee families, who since 1948 have lived on a three-dunum plot owned by the church. The Patriarch, at the request of the Bir Zeit Greek Orthodox community, had earlier approved the building of a new church on this lot but construction required the removal of residents.

The refugees, lacking the resources and powers of the Greek Patriarch, took their case to the Palestinian people, pleading through the local press for assistance in their fight to remain in Bir Zeit. On April 19 some of the families held a sit-in at UNRWA offices in Ramallah to pressure UNRWA officials to intervene and "do their best to prevent their eviction."

Seven months later the court case is still pending but it may soon be solved out of court. The Ramallah magistrate has asked both parties to reach agreement to resolve their differences peacefully. A committee was formed of representatives of both sides and local figures to work out a compromise.

Homes belonging to Kufr 'Ana refugees built on land in Bir Zeit now under dispute by the Greek Orthodox Church: *"The refugees... only want to be guaranteed shelters so they can live peacefully until some solution to the Palestinian problem is reached and the refugee problem resolved... they prefer to return to their homes in Kufr 'Ana, which the Israeli government has given to Jewish immigrants."***/AO photo**

Since 1953 the Greek Orthodox community has been trying to remove the refugees from the lot in order to build a church.

The fact that those threatened with eviction are already refugees has complicated the issue and given it popular attention. If the committee fails to find a solution, the court is expected to rule in favour of the Patriarch, making the case even more politically damaging: Palestinian families being turned out of their homes through the powers of an Arab court.

The Refugees

The 1948 war left more than a million Palestinians homeless. Among these were 3000 from the village of Kufr 'Ana, near Lydda. The Kufr 'Ana refugees, along with several thousand, fled to the village of Bir Zeit. There they built temporary shelters of concrete with zinc roofs in the olive tree fields on the outskirts of the village. They settled there with the strong conviction that soon they would be able to return to their village. They had no idea that 36 years later they would still be refugees on someone else's land and the issue of their return still pending.

After the war, some Bir Zeit residents pressured the refugees to leave to other locations set up especially for refugees. According to 75-year-old Mahmoud Abd al-Hadi, the four Bir Zeit *mukhtars* at the time tried first with Jordan's King Abdullah, then with his grandson King Hussein and later with the Israeli military occupation authorities to evict them from their temporary shelters. The refugees claimed the pressures to evict them were due to socio-economic reasons. The land where they sought refuge was all olive orchards and its owners were hindered from tending to their trees or using the land for any other purpose. Socially, the presence of the refugees was blamed for "disrupting the social structure of Bir Zeit" and altering the appearance of the small town.

During the reign of Abdullah, there were several thousand refugees reaching almost 60,000. But this number gradually dropped during the first two post-war years as many moved on to Jericho and other West Bank locations.

Until 1967, when Israel occupied the West Bank and Gaza, the number of refugees in Bir Zeit was still in the thousands. The exact figure is not available because the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) never sponsored the makeshift camp built by the refugees. The agency allowed the refugees to use its facilities elsewhere but did not build a school or clinic as is the case in several other refugee camps run by the international organisation. UNRWA officials could not explain why the Bir Zeit camp was never recognised as an official refugee camp or why the refugees were not moved immediately after 1948 to UNRWA-run camps set up throughout the West Bank.

After 1967 the number of refugees in Bir Zeit dropped drastically as many fled during the war to Jordan and others left the camp as their economic situation improved. Only 15 families still live in the camp.

According to Abd al-Hadi, who is the representative of the refugees in Bir Zeit since 1948, various owners of the land attempted many times to force them to leave. The land was first owned by the Sayieh family until 1953, when parts of it were sold to the Greek Orthodox community in the village and other local buyers.

Abd al-Hadi said Sayieh used to collect a sack of flour from UNRWA as 'rent.' Sayeih, however, was later ordered by the Jordanian government not to take the flour since it violated UNRWA regulations. Abd al-Hadi said this was the end of landowners receiving any type of payment from the refugees or from any other source. In usual cases the host government pays landowners for land used by UNRWA to accommodate the refugees. Israel has never contributed anything, of course, and UNRWA claims no responsibility for the camp.

Abd al-Hadi said "trouble began soon after the land was sold in 1953." It was sold to three individuals — Abd al-Latif al-Abed, A'aid Owdeh and Matta Keileh — and to the Greek Orthodox community. He said the landowners "tried all avenues to get rid of us, including going to court." None succeeded. When some of the refugees left in 1967, the landowners moved onto their land and built there. Part of the land, about six dunums — half is church-owned, remained occupied by refugees. The 15 families resident there in very poor conditions.

According to the refugees, every time they attempt to build to improve living conditions, the town municipality tears it down. The Bir Zeit acting mayor, Ibrahim Awadallah, said the town cannot allow any kind of construction on the land since it is not owned by the refugees. This is why the refugees still live under metal roofs and in one-room homes. Awadallah said only those who own the land can apply for a licence to build on it.

Abd al-Hadi's son, Khalil, who is married with 10 children living in one room in the camp, complained of the squalid conditions. He said, "We have been living under metal roofs for 36 years. Every time it rains it sounds as if the whole house is about to collapse. The metal roofs make it very hot in the summer and cold in the winter. There is no indoor plumbing and the outdoor lavatories are very difficult to get to at night and during cold weather." Khalil suffers from arthritis, which he blames on their poor living situation.

The Greek Orthodox Church

The Greek Orthodox community comprises less than one-third of the Bir Zeit population, estimated at 3000, not including those living abroad. The Orthodox community has a little old church in the older section of town which parishioners say is about to fall to pieces. According to Harb Jaser and Sami Ghatas, members of the church, the premises are so small that people end up waiting outside when there is a wedding or big holiday. They both said the congregation urgently needs a new church to accommodate the community and they want a school built alongside it.

The rest of the Bir Zeit township is Muslim or Roman Catholic. The Catholics last year finished building a large church in the centre of the town.

The Greek community bought the disputed, three-dunum plot from the Sayieh family in 1953 with the intention of building a church on the plot. But since the community could not afford the construction expenses, they turned the lot over to the Partiarchate, which in turn, told the community that it would not build anything on the lot as long as there are refugees living on it.

Since 1953 the church has been stymied. The Jordanian government would not allow the removal of refugees from wherever they had settled. After 1967, Israeli occupation attempts again were made to remove the refugees without success.

The Greek Orthodox community owns another seven-dunum lot in Bir Zeit on a semi-steep hill., Jaser said the community would have built a church on that lot if it were possible but its location makes it very difficult for older people, who usually walk, to get to. Even those who have cars would have a hard time reaching it, especially in the winter, Jaser added. The church also owns olive tree fields which were donated by members of the church but these are harvested every year and the proceeds sent to the Patriarchate.

The church property is put in trust into the hands of the Patriarchate, which becomes the sole owner of the property with the right to dispose of it as it sees fit. Legally the Patriarch in Jerusalem is the uppermost authority, possessing the final word in everything. All the property entrusted to the church is in his possession.

The Patriarch and all his administrative staff are Greek nationals. Palestinian priests are in charge of local churches in the country but are not given any higher position in the hierachy. To work as community priests they must marry but this means they can never become bishops, according to the regulations of the church. The Greek staff are not married, enabling them to maintain the power positions. The Greek Orthodox community in Palestine is, however, 98 percent Palestinian.

The Patriarch decides when and where to build a church based on requests from his constituency. He provides the money for a church on condition that the property is registered in the name of the Patriarchate. He also appoints a Greek monk to be in charge of the church and any possible proceeds from it, like the sale of agricultural products grown on the lot of the church — olives in the case of Bir Zeit. The Patriarchate currently owns much of Jerusalem's Old City property and is considered to be one of the wealthiest landowners in the country.

The Dispute

Before the suit was filed this April the Bir Zeit Orthodox community tried to negotiate with the refugees over a settlement acceptable to all. Several suggestions were offered. One called for giving each of the refugee families JD500 to help them find alternative shelter. "We went all the way to the United States to collect the money from our relatives and friends there in order to pay the refugees," says Sami Ghatas. "We came back with the money and offered each family the JD500 compensation for leaving the land."

The refugees rejected the offer, however, saying the money was not enough. "The money is not enough even to buy the bricks," said Khalil.

The refugees, instead, asked that the church find them another location in the vicinity of the land plot and build a shelter for them on it. According to the refugees, this is the least they could accept since this would guarantee that they will not become homeless again after 36 years in a refugee camp.

The Greek Orthodox community agreed to give the refugees one dunum of church property to live on while the community used the other two dunums to build their church. But considering past experience with landowners, the refugees are worried that after they are moved to this one dunum, the church will later try to move them off it as well. But community representatives insist that they would not try to move the refugees again in the future.

The refugees who live nearby but not on the plot owned by the church accuse the landowners of waging an undeclared war in order to intimidate them into leaving the area. According to the refugees, stones are regularly thrown on them during the night but they are not sure where the stones come from even though they point their finger at the landowners.

Khalil said that last year petrol bombs were thrown at them and a son of one of the landowners was arrested on suspicion of being responsible for the attack. However, when a similar incident occurred while the man was in jail he was set free. No one else has been arrested and charged with the incident.

These charges were strongly rejected by Harb Jaser, who is also treasurer for the Greek Orthodox church in Bir Zeit. Jaser said he never heard of stone-throwing at the refugees and said that if it did occur, "it probably was due to internal fighting among the refugees." Other Bir Zeit residents acknowledged the stone-throwing incidents but did not want to accuse any party of them.

The demand by the refugees that the Greek Orthodox church build alternative housing from them within Bir Zeit township seems to have upset the Patriarch enough for him to file suit asking that all six families of refugees living on church property be evicted without compensation. The church hired Aziz Shehadeh and Elias Khoury, two of the most successful lawyers in the West Bank, to represent them in this case. The refugees hired Ali Safareen as their advocate.

According to sources close to the Patriarch, he was upset that refugees were asking for so much for leaving property they do not own. The church accuses the refugees of being "greedy" and of wanting to profit from something not legally theirs. The Patriarch also, *Al Fajr* learned, refuses to build a church on the lot as long as there are refugees on it, even if they are on the one dunum offered to the refugees by the church community.

Khalil and other refugees said they never thought of making profit off their situation. They said they only want to be guaranteed shelter so they can live peacefully until some solution to the Palestinian problem is reached and the refugee problem resolved. They said they prefer to return to their homes in Kufr 'Ana, which the Israeli government has given to Jewish immigrants.

The church also charged that some of the refugees own property in other locations, and that they could leave their shacks and build on other property. Abd al-Hadi also said that "if any of us has better property outside, why would we want to live in this miserable place?"

Palestinian institutions and refugees steadily refuse any kind of resettlement of refugees and agree only to a return to their upsurped homes, unless they be given compensation agreed upon by all parties concerned in the Palestinian issue.

The Ramallah court in its October 10 session agreed to give both parties until November 24 to resolve the case out of court. It is believed that otherwise the court will rule in favour of the church and the refugees will be evicted. The refugees, the church and mediators all said they want to reach an out-of-court settlement. Acting mayor Ibrahim Awadallah said, "The solution is now with the Patriarch." He said, "The court case should be withdrawn and the Patriarch should find a reasonable solution that would take into consideration the conditions of the refugees. As a man of religion, the Patriarch should be the first to call for understanding and reconciliation. We urge the Partiarch to solve the problem in a humanitarian way."

The refugees say if the court rules against them without finding them adequate alternative shelter, they will not leave the land and the church will have to "demolish their shacks on top of them." UNRWA director RM Gallagher says the case is "a private matter which we will not be involved in." Nor will they supply the refugees with shelter unless there is no room in the refugee camps run by it in the West Bank. The refugees do not want to be moved into another refugee camp because, Khalil said, "We have been living here since 1948 and have gotten used to each other. We are like family here and it would be hard to adjust to a new camp."

Bir Zeit municipality is also not in a position to help the refugees in the case of their forced eviction, which, Awadallah said, "We will condemn. The municipality is not in charge of or responsible for the refugees." But he added that the municipality will deal with the problem if it comes up.

The local mediators seem hopeful that a solution will be found acceptable for both the church and the refugees. According to lawyer Shehadeh, several alternatives remain to be discussed with that a solution will be found acceptable for both the church and the refugees. According to lawyer Shehadeh, several alternatives remain to be discussed with the Patriarch. He and other locals are convinced that the refugees cannot be thrown out of their homes without first finding a suitable alternative.

"The Palestinian institutions and refugees steadily refuse any kind of resettlement of refugees..."

April 19 sit-in by the refugees at UNRWA offices in Ramallah: *Possibly "the first case in the history of the Palestinian turmoil that refugees are evicted from shelters through the powers of an Arab court."***/AO photo**

The Question of Jerusalem

We continue this week **Henry Cattan's** paper on the status of Jerusalem presented in Oslo April 2-4, 1984.

continued from last week

2. *Turning to the uprooting of the Arab residents of Moden Jerusalem in 1948*, mention was made above of the testimony regarding the terror exercised by the *Haganah* against them and the liquidation of those who remained. However, the most effective terrorist means which was used to drive them out from their ancestral city was the massacre by troops of the *Irgun* on April 9, 1948 of the inhabitants of Deir Yassin, a small peaceful village which lies one and a half miles to the west of Jerusalem.

An authentic account of this savage and cold-blooded massacre was given by Jacques de Reynier, the chief delegate of the International Red Cross who, at the risk of his life, was able to reach the village and witness the aftermath of the tragedy: "Three hundred persons, were massacred...without any military reason or provocation of any kind, old men, women, children, newly-born, were savagely assassinated with grenades and knives by Jewish troops of the *Irgun*, perfectly under the control and direction of their chiefs."

Moreover, to make sure that the massacre had its intended effect on the Arab population, the few survivors, including some women, were paraded by *Irgun* forces in three trucks in the streets of Jerusalem to be shown as the prize of their "military victory", and on the same night the Jewish terrorist leaders who planned and executed the outrage held a press conference and boasted of their deed.

"ISRAEL ORGANISED A MASSIVE TRANSFER OF JEWS TO JERUSALEM AND GAVE THEM ALL ARAB HOMES IN MODERN JERUSALEM AND IN THE 4 LARGEST VILLAGES... WEST OF JERUSALEM: LIFTA, DEIR YASSIN, EIN KAREM AND EL MALHA."

In the absence of a census of the refugees, the number of Arabs who were uprooted from Jerusalem in 1948 was not determined with precision. It is clear that 12 residential Arab quarters in Modern Jerusalem, comprising 10,000 homes, were completely emptied of their inhabitants and one can estimate that the Palestinians who were then displaced numbered 50,000 to 60,000, a figure which represented two-thirds of the Arab population of the *corpus separatum*.

Having displaced the Arab inhabitants of Jerusalem, Israel did not allow their return despite General Assembly Resolution 194 (III) of December 11 1948 and subsequent resolutions that called for the repatriation of the Palestine refugees.

Again in 1967, following Israel's capture of the Old City, more Palestinians were uprooted by recourse to terrorist tactics. Immediately after their occupation of the Old City, Israeli troops intimidated the Arab inhabitants in order to force them to leave as in 1948 and to seek refuge in Jordan. Loudspeakers announced the capture of the Old City and asked the Arab inhabitants to leave for Amman "while the road was still open." They were told that their safety would not be guaranteed if they remained.

In other places, such as in Bethlehem, the people were ordered to leave within two hours, failing which their houses would blown up over their heads. Some heeded the threats, others did not.

In his Report to the Security Council, Mr N G Gussing, the special representative of the secretary-general of the UN, mentioned "persistent reports of acts of intimidation by Israeli armed forces and of Israeli attempts to suggest to the population, by loudspeakers mounted on cars, that they might be better off on the East Bank. There have also been reports that in several localities buses and trucks were put at the disposal of the population for travel purposes. Several hundred Arab families were forcibly ousted from their homes in the early days of the capture of the Old City, and buses and trucks took them to Jericho.

The total number of Palestinians from the West Bank, including Jerusalem, who by reason of hostilities or intimidation took refuge in Jordan in June 1967 was estimated by the government of Jordan at 410,248. Both the Security Council by its Resolution 237 of June 14 1967 and the General Assembly by its Resolution 2252 of July 4 1967 called upon Israel to facilitate the return of those inhabitants who were displaced. In apparent compliance, Israel announced in July 1967 that it would permit the return of the refugees of the last conflict.

After prolonged negotiations between the International Red Cross and the governments of Israel and Jordan and much discussion about rules and procedure, the application forms which Israel required should be submitted by the refugees were issued on August 12 1967. Notwithstanding the stringent conditions which hemmed in the repatriation programme, 40,000 applications were submitted to Israel for the return of 150,000 Palestinian refugees. The majority of those applications were not approved or even considered. Only a small number, 14,000, were permitted to return. However, at the same time as this token repatriation was taking place, Israel forced 17,000 Palestinians to leave and to seek refuge on the East Bank.

The number of Palestinians who were displaced in 1967 from their homes in Jerusalem has not been determined with precision. Estimates of the number vary from 7,000 according to the International Red Cross to 30,000 according to other sources. What is certain, however, is that Israel did not permit the repatriation of the refugees whose homes were in Jerusalem.

This significant fact is brought to light by the commissioner-general of UNRWA who reported: "Among those permitted to return, it appears that there were very few former inhabitants of the Old City of Jerusalem." The reason for this veto on the return of the inhabitants of Jerusalem is obvious: the return of the original inhabitants does not fit into the Israeli scheme of Judaisation of the city.

Houses — for Jewish occupancy only — built in the 1950s in the Katamon district, one of the 12 residential Arab quarters in modern Jerusalem completely emptied of their inhabitants in 1948: *"They were told their safety would not be guaranteed if they remained."*

3. *As to the looting and confiscation of Palestinian property*, this was a general phenomenon which was concomitant to the Israeli occupation of Palestine, but the account here will be restricted to what occurred in Jerusalem.

One of the first acts of the Jewish forces at the time of their capture of the Arab quarters in Modern Jerusalem in 1948 was to loot the Arab dwellings which, in most cases, were left intact with their contents by reason of the precipitate flight or liquidation of their owners. This was a massive plunder reminiscent of uncivilised times. George Kirk wrote in his book *The Middle East 1945-1950*: "It was apparently at Jaffa that Jewish troops first succumbed to the temptation to indulge in wholesale looting... and within a few days Jewish troops were looting the newly captured Arab suburbs of Jerusalem. Ben Gurion himself afterwards admitted that the extent to which responsible Jews of all classes became involved was a shameful and distressing spectacle."

After the plunder of the movable possessions of the Arab inhabitants of Jerusalem, Israel turned its attention to their real property. Israel seized and confiscated all property — lands, homes, businesses — that belonged to the Palestine refugees in Modern Jerusalem. The seizure was carried out under the Absentee Property Regulations (1948) and the confiscation was consummated by the Absentee Property Law (1950).

This last enactment purported to authorise the so-called Custodian of Absentee Property to sell 'absentee' property — as Arab refugee property was deceitfully described — at its 'official value.' This formula was nothing but a thin disguise for its confiscation at a nominal consideration. All the Arab residential quarters of Modern Jerusalem were thus 'sold' to the new Jewish settlers. The magnitude of this plunder of Arab refugee property can be appreciated when it is realised that the Arabs owned the greater part of the properties in Modern Jerusalem. Needless to observe that such confiscation by a military occupation is unlawful and void under international law.

The Conciliation Commission asked Israel to abrogate the Absentee Property legislation and to suspend all measures of requisition and occupation of Arab homes and lands. But Israel refused. In 1950, the General Assembly by its Resolution 394 (V) directed the Conciliation Commission "to continue negotiations with the parties concerned regarding measures for the protection of the rights, property and interests of the refugees." Israel, however, ignored the Conciliation Commission's efforts to protect Arab refugee property.

No action was taken by the UN during all those years to protect the property rights of the refugees. An attempt in 1967 to secure the appointment of a UN Custodian over Arab refugee property failed owing to the opposition of Israel and the US Government, which prevented the adoption by the General Assembly of a resolution to that effect.

However, on December 15 1983, by its Resolution 38/83 H, the General Assembly recalled its Resolution 394 (V) of December 14 1950 and requested the secretary-general of the UN to take all appropriate steps for the protection and administration of Arab property, assets and property rights in Israel, and to establish a fund for the receipt of income derived therefrom, on behalf of the rightful owners. Only Israel and the US voted against this resolution which, it may be expected, will be ignored by Israel like all other UN resolutions.

4. Coming now to *the colonisation of Jerusalem and its environs*. This began in 1948. Israel then organised a massive transfer of Jews to Jerusalem and gave them all Arab homes in Modern Jerusalem and in the four largest villages that were under its occupation west of Jerusalem: namely, Lifta, Deir Yassin, Ein Karem and El Malha. Moreover, all Arab land in and around Modern Jerusalem which was under Israeli occupation was confiscated and used for a vast construction programme. The Israeli Knesset and the Yad Vashem Holocaust memorial were built on confiscated Arab property.

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Palestine and Culture

Taysir Barakat: An Artist's Adventure in Mind, Heart and Existence

by Baher Ashhab

"My God! They're so weird," said a 16-year-old schoolgirl to her girlfriend as they stared in disbelief at Taysir Barakat's paintings. The girls were among the 100 persons plus who attended the opening of Gazan artist Barakat's first exhibition in Jerusalem November 6 at *El-Hakawati* Theatre in East Jerusalem. The girl's remark, however naive and inexact, was reiterated by the many exhibition visitors, some of whom gathered enthusiastically around Barakat as he attempted to explain the hidden mysteries in his art. Barakat's analysis satisfied his audience enough for the 16-year-old schoolgirl to rephrase her remark to "how intriguing!"

The schoolgirl's reaction to Barakat's artwork reflects to some extent the general local attitude to fine art, an attitude of indifference that can be understood because of the lack of exposure of different foreign art movements and lack of serious art education in local schools. Barakat's style, which mixes foreign and local Palestinian subject matters in abstract expressionism, is unique to the Palestinian art scene.

Barakat was born in 1959 in Jabalya refugee camp in Gaza. The poverty and harsh conditions in which he grew up seem to have had a great effect on his art. Through his brush and paint he renders on canvas the feelings of hundreds of thousands of Palestinians, like him robbed of a stable and happy childhood. "As a child growing up in a refugee camp," Barakat explains, "I was never actually consciously aware of the inimical conditions around me; but it was later that I began to discover the stringent effects these conditions had on my subconscious and subsequently on the way I perceived life."

It was the relationship between his conscious and subconscious experience as a child that Barakat tried to later express in his paintings.

With the exception of three landscape paintings, Barakat's large canvases are dominated by child figures, almost all with featureless faces, their arms pointed towards the sky and their long hair flying upward as if blown by a strong wind. In one painting Barakat portrayed the children performing sufi-style group dances (a frenzied dance performed by a small sect of fundamentalist Muslims who are said to have performed the dance by the power of God's Spirit) on shack roofs. The contrast between the mystic – but playful mood of the children and the disquieting tense environment that engulfs them, rendered in flaming colours, is indeed most intriguing.

The immediate feeling on seeing Barakat's complex compositions is one of "quiet before the storm." His persistent use of cool and warm colours in a clever mixture creates a wonderful paradox of subtle and garish, joy and sadness, optimism and gloom – consciousness and subconsciousness.

Barakat obtained his formal art education at the Alexandria College of Fine Arts. The influence of Egyptian art movements and the Egyptian environment on his work is obvious. At least five of his paintings combine Egyptian village scenes, hieroglyphic symbols and pharonic postures that add a touch of mysticism to his compositions. These paintings were his graduation project, Barakat explains. They were also his first serious attempt at abstract expressionism.

The influence of non-Palestinian art movements on local art is healthy, according to Barakat. He said that he encourages Palestinian artists to "investigate foreign art movements, especially in other third world communities where people share with us many social grievances."

Upon his return from Egypt, Barakat lived in the small village of Deir Ghassanah, 13 miles northwest of Ramallah. While there, he spent much time watching village children at play and, at times, joining them in their folk dancing. Later he expressed what he saw and felt on canvas. The paintings he produced in Deir Ghassanah are probably the most refined and original of his work.

In one painting he portrays a day in the life of a village child. The painting is horizontally divided into five sections. In the first the sun rises as the rooster calls, and the child awakes and is lovingly nourished by a mother figure in the next section. He rushes outside and is met by a neighbour child. The two become four, and, in the last section, the four line up to dance the Palestinian *dabkeh* as two other children rush to join them. Barakat explained that this was an average day for a child in Deir Ghassanah, peaceful and joyful. Yet the extremely worried expression on the mother's face in the second section speaks of the ominous future of these children.

Barakat's work successfully captures some of the metaphysical and mystical aspects of the Palestinian child in a refugee camp and in the village. His style is distinct from the contemporary Palestinian art movement, in which realism and romanticism predominate. Barakat proved that for a work of art to be successful it must be expressive of some profound emotion or spiritual experience. All those who attend his exhibition, which lasts until November 18, will surely be affected by the emotion of Barakat's work, reaching beyond the canvas frame.

A Christian Ruling On 'Whose Palestine?'

by Daoud Kuttab

Whose Promised Land
by Colin Chapman
Lion Publishing price L1.95

The Palestinian question has never been an easy one to answer for many people. The United Nations even held a special conference in Geneva this year to discuss the issue from all angles. *Whose Promised Land?*, written by Colin Chapman and published by Lion Publishing, is another contribution in an interesting debate that has rocked the Middle East for the past century. The book attempts to deal with this question from the viewpoint of biblical Christianity, of which the question of Palestine is a central part.

Since 1968 Chapman, a British pastor, has been working and living in various parts of the Middle East. A member of the Anglican church, he visited Jerusalem as a tourist once before the Israeli occupation and a second time after occupation to attend the Anglican Synod. Other than his visits, Chapman's closest contact with the Palestinian question is his marriage to a British nurse who worked in Palestinian refugee camps in Jordan during the massacres in 1970 and '71.

Chapman's attempts to cover the historic background of Palestine are admirable in that his findings appear to be an honest attempt at unbiased research. Written primarily for Christian fundamentalists who have been taught that Palestine is the promised land exclusively for Jews, *Whose Promised Land?* objectively reviews the historical and religious arguments and the biblical prophecies involved in the question of who the rightful owner of this troubld land is.

In the historical survey, Chapman

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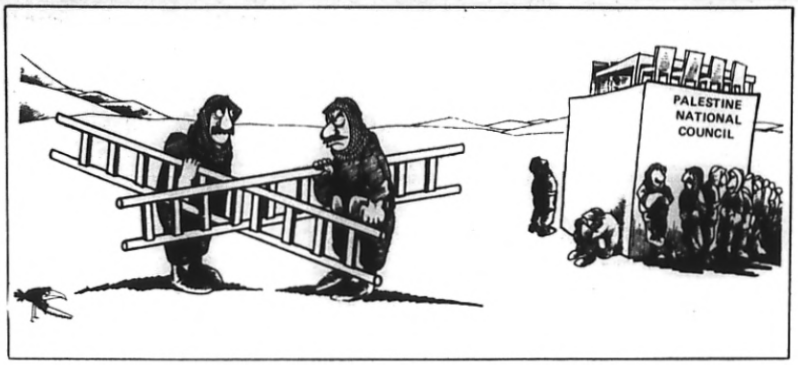
WINDOW ON THE ARAB PRESS



The announcement of an upcoming PNC meeting in Amman, the Lebanese decision to boycott the Naqoura talks with Israel and continued trouble at Dheisheh camp were the main stories in the local press this week.

Palestinian papers ran long articles and interviews reflecting the reaction of various Palestinian personalities to the proposed PNC session.

Lebanon's decision to boycott the military talks with Israel until the release of four south Lebanese leaders was also given prominence.

Local papers focussed on the plight of Palestinian refugees at the Dheisheh camp near Bethlehem and the residents' concern over the continued vigil of settler leader Rabbi Moshe Levinger outside the camp. Newspapers also reported on a press conference by the newly-formed Committee for the Defence of Refugee Camps.

Vicious Circle

The matter is over. Reagan was re-elected and the American people have gone back to normal life.

But the matter is not over in all the Arab countries and it seems that it will never be over. Nothing goes on in these countries without finding its meaning and implication in the results of the American elections.

Isn't America the No.1 enemy of the Arabs? How come then the struggling, progressive and revolutionary Arab regimes can give up studying and analysing this dangerous enemy? It is up to the Americans to see otherwise. The Arabs have other affairs.

But this Arab affair does not go beyond turning in a vicious circle: Reagan wins and Mondale loses. He wins with Jewish votes or loses without their votes... etc., without trying to go out of that circle for tens of years.

Yet we do not ask here that concern with American elections end. We demand awareness of the fact that any American president, a Republican or a Democrat, will never change the status of the US in anything. Why should we wait for the results of the American elections? Why should we link our fateful decisions to them?

The awareness of this fact is based on the animosity of the American administration to the Arab cause in general. This animosity, in turn, is based upon the huge American interests in the area. The more widespread these American interests are the greater and more widespread this American hostility will be, and not vice-versa.

If the Arab countries, or at least some of them, want to study and analyse the causes of this hostility and the causes of the successive disasters in the area, they have, first of all, to study and analyse American interests in the area in the whole Middle East. Then they can lay the foundations for an Arab resolution to pressure the US so that the latter will be able to 'discover' an Arab power, however minimal, that does not go in the vicious circle of the elections year after year, generation after generation without any action.

AL FAJR
November 8

Difficult Negotiations

Yesterday the Lebanese-Israeli military negotiations began under the auspices of the UN and with the blessings of Syria and the US. The Lebanese delegation aims at securing Israeli withdrawal from the Lebanese territories occupied in 1982.

The Israeli delegation seeks guarantees that would prevent any military operations against Israel from the Lebanese territory. The negotiations are being conducted at a time when both Israel and Lebanon are going through difficult times. The Israeli government is under immense internal pressure to withdraw from Lebanon. In Lebanon, the internal differences among the various militias renders it extremely difficult for the national unity government to implement its programmes to achieve unity and stability in Lebanon.

The danger still hangs over Lebanon in case the Israeli forces withdraw from south Lebanon. For when the Israeli forces withdrew from the mountains, violent clashes erupted between the various militias trying to control the area.

We hope that the members of the Lebanese national unity government will do their best to avoid such a thing in the south.

But the negotiations will not be easy. Israel insists on giving a role to the SLA in the agreement. Lebanon totally rejects this Israeli demand. This will further complicate the negotiations and will postpone the agreement and withdrawal.

Lebanon is supported in its just demands by the majority of the world. We all remember UN resolutions 508 and 509 calling for Israel's withdrawal from Lebanon unconditionally.

AL QUDS
November 9

Why the PNC?

The rapid development of events in the region emphasises the need to convene the PNC.

Its convening is the only means to keep the PLO and protect its achievements. The convening of the council means the end of the state of paralysis in the legitimate institutions. It will also offer responses from the highest Palestinian authority to the challenges facing the Arab and the Palestinian peoples.

Despite all efforts by the Palestinian leadership to normalise Syrian-Palestinian relations, nothing was achieved.

All those who care for the interest of our people are requested to attend the PNC meetings. Let's unite our efforts to make the session a success.

AL SHA'AB
November 10

Damascus' Orders?!

The Syrian paper *al-Thawra* (The Revolution) issued its orders to the Palestinians the day before yesterday to boycott the 17th PNC session to be held in Amman in a few days. The paper also issued a *fatwa* [formal legal opinion] that this session is illegal. It emphasised the need that all Palestinian factions should agree to it.

It is neither something new nor is it strange that the Syrian regime paper gives orders concerning an internal Palestinian affair. It applies and practices the method of the regime it represents. This regime has always tried to impose guardianship on the Palestinian national decision through criminal aggression against Palestinian camps in north Lebanon.

The factions from which the paper wants approval of the session are precisely those groups dominated by Syrian intelligence. Such groups do not have any respect or weight in the Palestinian arena because they have always been a strange and evil offspring. Unfortunately these groups include the head of the Palestine National Council who has contented himself, during the Tel al-Za'tar massacres and the Syrian invasion of Lebanon in 1976 and during the Syrian impotent stand in 1982 and the aggression on the camps in 1983, with smoking cigars and fiddling with his valuable "worry beads" and composing poetry to praise the Syrian regime. They also include the official PLO spokesman who says nothing except to praise the traits of the Syrian president and his regime.

If the Syrian regime is moving quickly to conclude a new deal with American imperialism, a deal that may compensate it for the deal it dreamed of in 1976, and if this regime wants to continue striking PLO unity and using marginal mercenaries, this should urge the factions of the Democratic Alliance to reconsider their stand. We know that what the leaders and officials of these factions say about the Syrian regime in public differs from what they think of it in private. We also realise how they will never forgive the Syrian regime for what it has committed against the Palestinian people.

But we realise also that everyone must take a stand in this life, and that any gain that is achieved will soon disappear in the face of national interest. There is still time for the Democratic Alliance factions to declare their commitment to the national unity agreement.

AL SHA'AB
November 12

PNC: Light at the End of the Tunnel

Perhaps the Palestinian arena in the occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip is the most prominent Arab arena in determining the attitude toward convening the 17th PNC session.

This attitude was clearly defined through the inevitability of convening the session as soon as possible and anywhere, since it is only the attitude that governs the location in this regard.

When the legitimate Palestinian leadership, represented by the leader Yasir Arafat, was looking for that location in every land and was encountering obstacles and attempts to confiscate the independent Palestinian decision and to split the unity of the PLO, the masses in the occupied territories were licking their wounds and trying to bolster hope and optimism in national unity in an awareness that went beyond all differences.

But those obstacles, conditions and dissident indicators began to harm the reputation and dignity of the PLO and to jeopardise the Palestinian fate.

Israeli contribution in this field became quite clear with the order issued by Defence Minister Yitzkak Rabin to prevent PNC members in the occupied territories from attending the session anywhere.

In view of this and for the sake of decisiveness and clarity, all organisations, institutions and figures in the occupied territories declared their clear opinion supporting the convening of the 17th session in Amman on the 22nd of this month.

The insistence of the masses in the occupied territories on convening the PNC in the fixed time and place does not stem only from backing the legitimate leadership but it also underlines the (need) to confront the rapid political changes in the area.

Let the 17th session be convened. It is the last light at the end of the dark tunnel. We will never allow it to be extinguished under any circumstances.

AL FAJR
November 13

Question of Jerusalem

continued from page 10

Again in 1967 and since then Arab lands in and around the Old City were confiscated for the creation of Jewish settlements or apartment buildings for the exclusive use of Israelis. Although the creation of settlements in the area of the *corpus separatum* of the City of Jerusalem received no attention from the UN prior to 1967, the situation changed after Israel's occupation of the Old City and the UN began to censure or condemn Israeli actions.

On March 22 1979, the Security Council adopted Resolution 446 which, *inter alia*, called upon Israel to rescind its actions and not to transfer its own civilian population into the occupied territories. The Resolution also charged the president of the Security Council to appoint a commission to examine the situation with regard to settlements in the Arab territories occupied since 1967, including Jerusalem. In its report dated July 12 1979, the Commission mentions that 17 settlements were established in and around Jerusalem. In the Old City, 320 housing units were established for Jews, 160 Arab houses destroyed, 600 homes expropriated and 6,500 Arab residents evacuated.

It appears from the Commission's Report that Jewish settlement in and around Jerusalem was more intensive than in other occupied areas. The Commission states that the number of settlers in Jerusalem and the West Bank has reached 90,000. The Commission gives no breakdown of this figure, but it seems that the largest number of those 90,000 settlers are found in the Jerusalem area.

The Commission observed in Paragraph 231 of its report that the Arab inhabitants still living in those territories, particularly in Jerusalem and the West Bank, are subjected to continuous pressure to emigrate in order to make room for new settlers who, by contrast, are encouraged to come to the area.

The Israeli colonisation of Jerusalem has resulted in the tripling of the Jewish population which has risen from some 100,000 in 1948 to 300,000 in 1984 compared with 100,000 Arabs presently living in the city. It may be noted that most of the city's original Christian and Moslem inhabitants have been permanently displaced and were not allowed to return and that the number of the Christian inhabitants has dwindled from 25 percent to four percent of the total population of the city.

It is obvious that Israel's actions in Jerusalem since 1948 have sought and succeeded in the alteration of dominion, demography and land ownership with the object of obliterating the Arab and Christian character of the Holy City and exhuming the Jewish State which disappeared more than 25 centuries ago into the dust of history.

The drawing of a curtain by Israel over the history of Palestine is noted by Father Joseph L. Ryan who observes. "As a result of Zionist presentations, the impression is given that history of any consequence stopped in Palestine in the year 70 AD and only began again with the Zionist movement under Herzl."

continued next week

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Tokyo Exhibits Palestinian Art

Contemporary Palestinian art was featured in a Tokyo exhibit which opened November 7. The exhibit, organised by the PLO's Tokyo office, commemorated the visit to Japan of two Palestinian artists — Tamam al-Akhal Shammout and Kamal Boullata.

Bakr Abdel Munem, the PLO representative to Japan, spoke in the opening ceremony about the role of art in the Palestinian revolution. Munem also spoke of new developments in the Palestinian cause, specifically the forthcoming convening of the Palestinian National Council. Munem said the Palestinian people, including artists and fighters, will continue their just struggle until they establish a Palestinian state in their homeland.

The exhibit featured the work of 15 Palestinian artists, including some 50 paintings and silk screen prints. Ramallah artist Vladimir Tamari, whose works were on display, is now resident in Japan. Traditional costumes, dolls and other local handicrafts were also exhibited.

Rabin Meets Freij

Israeli Defence Minister Yitzhak Rabin repeated his rejection November 12 of a proposal to reopen Najah University early and to allow West Bank and Gaza Palestinians to travel to the site of the 17th Palestine National Council session.

Rabin's rejection was stated during his meeting with Bethlehem Mayor Elias Freij. The meeting was his first with a Palestinian personality since Rabin took office.

The Israeli defence minister agreed to allow the Bethlehem municipality to build a sports field and to bring in US$700,000 of the municipality's funds deposited in the Arab Bank in Amman.

Freij told *Al Fajr* that 10 other requests submitted to Rabin are under review. According to Freij, Rabin will give an answer to these requests within a week.

Among the request currently under review are:

* Reopening Dheisheh camp exits and removing settler leader Levinger from his vigil in front of the camp;

* Rescinding Military Order 387, which deals with bringing in town funds from Jordan;

* Opening a district court in Bethlehem; and

* Allowing the municipality to collect town taxes.

Freij explained that the meeting, which was attended by council members and Bethlehem dignitaries, was more of a working session than a political parley. He said that no discussion of political subjects took place. Freij also said he didn't raise the problem of the need for elections in West Bank cities.

The official term of the municipality councils expired in 1980 but has been extended by military orders. Several of the council heads and mayors were sacked by the military. Most of the West Bank cities are now run by Israeli mayors or military-appointed committees.

November 16: At the *YMCA* East Jerusalem: Scrabble Evening. Everyone, including non-YMCA members, welcome. Game in English but language proficiency not required. 7:00 pm. For more information contact Michel Asfour or Nazih Freij at the YMCA. Telephone: 282-375.

November 17: March: annual demonstration to villages of Iqrit and Biram. The *Awdah* (Return) movement calls on all to join them in protesting the Israeli decision to evacuate the villages in 1951 and to continue to bar them from return. March begins at 10:00 am from the Sa'sa intersection, northeast of Nahariya, in Upper Galilee. Buses leave from Haifa bus station at 9:00 am. For more information call: (04) 660-498 or (04) 532-837.

November 17: At the *Nuzha/el-Hakawati* theatre Jerusalem *Ghorbal* theatre company from Shafa Amr presents Vacation. 2:00 pm.

November 22: Film Night at the *Nuzha-/el-Hakawati* theatre: Heaven Can Wait - starring Warren Beaty, Julie Christie and James Mason. 7:00 pm. For more information call 280957.

African Immigrants

continued from page 7

City, tried to preserve their original life-style, habits and customs. This was done first through opening a club, the "Sudanese Charitable Club," in 1935. "The aims of the club," an elderly man told *Al Fajr*, "were to disseminate cultural, health and social consciousness." He added that the members of the community used to meet in the club, which was located in *Habs al-Rabat*, discuss their problems and talk about their life in Africa. Besides the club, they also set up the "African Charitable Society," whose objective was to give aid to the needy among the African community.

In 1978, the youths of the community decided to revitalise the ailing Sudanese Club. Its name was changed to the African Youth Club, to preserve the memory of their fathers and grandfathers. Membership in this club was not exclusive; it was open also to the non-African Palestinians; "This indicates our complete social integration," said Husni Shahin. But the club did not last more than two years, for lack of financial support. Today the youths of the community play sports in other Palestinian clubs in the city and some are local stars in football and basketball and are important to the success of Palestinian teams.

The younger generation appears not to be torn by any contradictory feelings of being originally African and geographically Palestinian at the same time. They have acquired the Arabic language, the habits and the life-style of Palestinian society. "Unlike their fathers, who dream about going back to Africa to die, the younger generation feel that their fate is bound with the fate of the Palestinian people," said Mousa Ghuz. "The fact that a number of people of our community have paid the most precious price for the cause of the Palestinian people means that we feel strongly we are Arab Palestinians."

WEEKLY REVIEW

November 7, 1984

DHEISHEH TEACHER GOES ON TRIAL

NABLUS — The military court in Nablus will begin hearings into the case of Khaled al-Saifi, a teacher from Dheisheh camp, who was detained last month on charges of confronting a group of Jewish extremist settlers who stormed the camp.

12 STUDENTS REMANDED

NAQAB — Twelve students from Kusaifeh Secondary School in the Naqab were ordered remanded into police custody for eight days after they clashed with Israeli police to protest the authorities' position towards their school.

UNIVERSITY STUDENT JAILED, FINED

HEBRON — Nathmi Abd al-Fatah al-Futaftah, a student at Hebron University, was sentenced to two years in prison, five years suspended and a IS150,000 fine on charges of possessing illegal material.

Nathmi, who is a resident of the village of Tarqumia in the Hebron district, is a member of the university student council.

ANOTHER STUDENT RELEASED

KALANDIA — Israeli authorities released Diab al-Abed, a member of the student council at Kalandia Vocational Training Centre, after a two-month detention on charges of attempting to thwart the Jordanian-sponsored comprehensive exam in Ramallah and al-Bireh.

STUDENTS SUMMONED TO MILITARY

BEIT SAHOUR — Israeli authorities summoned students of two secondary classes at Beit Sahour Secondary School to the military headquarters in Bethlehem where they were questioned for five hours about a demonstration in Beit Sahour last week.

STUDENT'S CASE POSTPONED

NAZARETH — The magistrates court in Nazareth postponed its hearing into the case of student Omar Said of the Galilee village of Kufr Kanna who is charged with violating a town-arrest order imposed on him for the fourth straight time.

CHILD HIT BY ARMY CAR

GAZA — A nine-year-old girl from Gaza was hit by an Israeli army vehicle on Omar al-Mukhtar Street in the centre of Gaza. The girl, Rania Jihad al-Bitar, was critically injured and taken to hospital for treatment.

ISRAELI SOLDIERS KILL YOUNG PALESTINIAN

Atiyeh Ahmed Atiyeh, a resident of Jabalya refugee camp in the Gaza Strip, was shot dead by Israeli soldiers who suspected he was stealing parts of a car in Gaza.

The Israeli daily newspaper *Al Hamishmar* said an Israeli patrol noticed three young men dismantling parts of a car on Tuesday night. The patrol reportedly ordered the men to surrender but one of them ran away while the other two were detained.

The paper said the man who ran away was shot and killed because he refused to obey orders.

November 8, 1984

QALQILYA STUDENT IMPRISONED

QALQILYA — Ibrahim Ahmad Zaid, a resident of Qalqilya, was sentenced by the Ramallah military court to 15 months in prison and 15 months suspended on charges of membership in an illegal organisation.

Ibrahim is a student at Baghdad University.

NEW ROAD PAVED NEAR BEIT JALA

BEIT JALA — Israeli authorities have decided not to allow the Beit Jala municipality to issue licenses for construction along the sides of a new road soon to be paved linking Bethlehem and Hebron.

The new road is being built to avoid recurring spates of stone-throwing attacks on Israeli vehicles near Dheisheh camp.

MORE SETTLEMENTS

Four new settlements will be established next week in the occupied territories. The settlements, according to Israeli media, will be established in the Jordan Valley, the area of Kfar Etzion, Ashqelon and Naqab.

AROUB YOUTHS JAILED, FINED

AROUB — Majid Yusif Banat and Midhat Oudeh Ayoub, both from Aroub refugee camp, were sentenced by the military court in Nablus to four months in prison, six months suspended and a IS50,000 fine on charges of throwing stones at Israeli vehicles.

ARAB NURSING COLLEGE CRISIS OVER

An agreement was reached at the Arab Nursing College in al-Bireh between the administration and the student council and studies are expected to resume next week, three weeks after the female students went on strike.

The administration promised to meet all the demands of the students.

November 9, 1984

HEBRON PRISONERS ON STRIKE

HEBRON — Palestinian political prisoners in Hebron prison declared a strike and refused to receive visitors to protest bad conditions in the prison.

JENIN YOUTH IMPRISONED, FINED

JENIN — Nabil Nawaf Ghawadreh of Jenin was sentenced by the military court in Jenin to four months' imprisonment, two years suspended and a IS10,000 fine on charges of stone-throwing.

BZU TEACHER DETAINED

The Israeli military court has rejected an appeal by advocate Felicia Langer to release Abd al-Rahman al-Khatib on bail.

Al-Khatib, a teacher at Bir Zeit University, was detained 44 days ago on charges of "inciting" and training on weapons in the Soviet Union before the Israeli invasion of Lebanon.

He has complained that the authorities are ill-treating him in prison.

November 11, 1984

NOTABLES BANNED FROM TRAVELLING TO JORDAN

Israeli military authorities have prepared a list with the names of several West Bank notables who will be prevented from leaving for Jordan to attend the meeting of the Palestine National Council later this month.

TWO HOUSES DEMOLISHED NEAR BETHLEHEM

Israeli occupation authorities demolished two houses belonging to Arab citizens near Bethlehem on the pretext that the houses were built without prior permission from the authorities.

The first house is located in the village of Beit Skaria near the Kfar Etzion settlement and belongs to Ibrahim Attalah. The house was built in 1967. The second house is located in the village of Takua and belongs to Suleiman Mohammed Suleiman.

8 YOUTHS REMANDED FOR MEMBERSHIP

NABLUS — Israeli military court in Nablus extended the detention of eight youths from the village of Salfit near Nablus for one month on charges of membership in an illegal organisation and setting fire to an Israeli bus.

The eight are: Ali Faraj Waktibeh, Musalam Mahmoud Musalam, Mahmoud Abu Aisheh, Nayef Shahin, Nissim Musalam, Majed Yusef and Rajeh Musalam.

TEACHER JAILED

NABLUS — The Israeli military court in Nablus sentenced teacher Abdel Aziz al-Shinar of Nablus to six months in prison, nine months suspended and a IS50,000 fine on charges of membership in an illegal organisation.

YOUTH JAILED

RAMALLAH — The military court in Ramallah sentenced Ali Abu Salem from the village of al-Laban al-Gharbiyeh near Ramallah to 10 months in prison and 10 months suspended on charges of membership in an illegal organisation.

JERICHO YOUTH JAILED

JERICHO — Ahmed Jibril al-Takrouri of Ain Dyouk in Jericho was sentenced by the Ramallah military court to two-and-a-half years in prison and another two-and-a-half years suspended on charges of membership in an illegal organisation, weapons training and throwing stones at Israeli vehicles.

WOMAN TREATED FOR ASSAULT BY POLICE

DHEISHEH — Ratibeh Taha al-Jarash, a 34-year-old woman from Dheisheh camp, was released from Beit Jala hospital after receiving medical treatment for wounds sustained when Israeli border policemen assaulted her two weeks ago.

AUTHORITIES THREATEN TO CLOSE MAGAZINE

NAZARETH — Israeli authorities summoned journalist and writer Afif Salem of Nazareth and questioned him about political articles that appeared in his magazine *Al Adab*.

The authorities charged that the magazine was supporting the PLO and threatened to close it down.

HALHOUL MUNICIPALITY EXPECTED TO CANCEL SACKING OF MAYOR

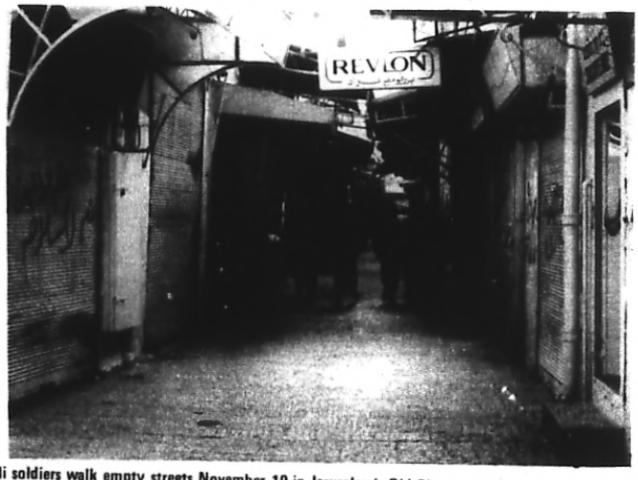
The Halhoul municipality will hold an emergency meeting today in which it is expected to cancel its former decision to sack its deported mayor Mohammed Milhem.

November 12, 1984

ARMY BULLDOZES ARAB HOUSE

BETHLEHEM — Israeli army bulldozers demolished the house of Hassan Salem Suleiman in the village of Nahalin near Bethlehem on the pretext that it was built without prior permission from the authorities.

Suleiman, father of five children, said he received no warning before the demolition.



Israeli soldiers walk empty streets November 10 in Jerusalem's Old City as all shops remain closed in Saturday general strike A/O photo.

Volunteers from the Social Youth Movement building a supporting wall near the Wadi Joz elementary school/AO photo

1500 DUNUMS CONFISCATED

Several residents of the village of Deir Qadis in the Ramallah district have recently received notification from Israeli authorities that they have decided to confiscate 1500 dunums of their lands.

The authorities claimed that the lands were government-owned and gave the villagers a period of 30 days to appeal the decision.

YOUTH SENTENCED

NABLUS — The military court in Nablus sentenced Samih Hab al-Rih and Jamal al-Sabagh, both from Jenin, to six months in prison and three years suspended on charges of demonstrating.

CHECKPOINTS NEAR BIR ZEIT

BIR ZEIT — Israeli border policemen set up checkpoints on the Ramallah-Bir Zeit road and the Jafna-Bir Zeit road, preventing access of some cars and students on the pretext that the roads were closed.

NINE JALAZON YOUTHS SENTENCED

JALAZON — The Israeli military court in Nablus sentenced nine youths from Jalazon refugee camp on charges of throwing stones at Israeli cars.

Jamal Sa'ed al-Din al-Qatami was sentenced to one year in prison and three years suspended. Suleiman Abu Touq received four months in prison and four months suspended. Mohammed Husni al-Araysheh received three months in prison and three months suspended.

The court gave the following a detention period of 45 days: Mohammed Abdullah Salhiyeh; Ramadan Ahmad al-Jirmi; Odeh Abu al-Tuyur; Riyadh Mohammed al-Kanash; Naim Nu'man al-Sheikh Saleh; Hamid Nu'man al-Sheikh Saleh; and Mohammed Rajab Shaker.

November 13, 1984

HEBRON STUDENTS STAGE SIT-IN

HEBRON — Students at the Hebron University continued their sit-in to protest the university administration's refusal to conduct a democratic dialogue with them.

The sit-in protest began on Monday.

GERMAN DELEGATION VISITS BZU

BIR ZEIT — A delegation of German workers and education experts from the city of Tremen in Germany visited Bir Zeit University and met with representatives of the student council.

AL-IBRAHIMIYEH COLLEGE RESUMES STUDIES

JERUSALEM — Studies were resumed at al-Ibrahimiyeh College in Jerusalem after an agreement was reached between the students and the administration.

UN REPORT CRITICISES ISRAEL'S RECORD ON HUMAN RIGHTS

Israel continues to disregard the Geneva Conventions on civilian rights in occupied territories and respect for these rights has deteriorated, a United Nations panel said.

"The hundreds of thousands (of Palestinans) who are outside the occupied territories are still denied the right to return while their property is being taken over for the establishment of Israeli settlements," its report said.

"Indeed, within Israel itself, movements have arisen and gained ground against this situation."

The panel, comprising government representatives from Sri Lanka, Senegal and Yugoslavia, urged the international community to take necessary measures to halt abuses.

The panel, a special committee of the General Assembly, said its members had been barred from visiting the occupied territories so they had taken evidence in Amman and Damascus from people with first-hand knowledge of Arab lands under Israeli occupation.

Referring to what it called the "lawless behaviour" of Israeli settlers, the panel said that no serious measures had been taken to halt their acts against Arab civilians.

According to the report, there was a pattern of censorship of newspapers, books and other forms of expression. It cited the case of Fathi Ghabin, an artist from the Gaza Strip, who was jailed for six months and fined last May for "incitement."

"In his painting, he used the four colours of the Palestinian flag," the report said. "The sole aim of such restriction is to stifle any attempt at Palestinian patriotic expression," the panel said.

Ecumenical Peace Academy Opens

More than 200 scholars, diplomats, politicians, and religious and community leaders participated October 25 in the opening of the new Inter-Faith Academy of Peace. The new peace academy operates out of the Institute of Ecumenical studies at Tantur on the Jerusalem-Bethlehem road.

William Klassen, dean of the peace academy, delivered an address on "Religion and the Gift of Peace." He said that "far too little energy and insight is coming from the religions of the world about some of the most pressing and vital questions of our time." Klassen said that the peace academy is "based on the assumption that peace may come more surely if scholars from the various major religious traditions of the world begin to study it, teach it and practise it."

Klassen spoke on world security, justice and love, concentrating mostly on the question of the arms race and the role that religion can play in opposing it. "What is patently clear by now is that the public is sick and tired of being told that we need the arms buildup for our security," he said.

The opening of the academy was attended by a number of Palestinian and Israeli personalities. The Canadian ambassador to Israel and a number of international residents attended.

Speaking to *Al Fajr* Klassen said that a number of academicians have been invited to carry out research on related topics and lead seminars in the coming months. Founder of the Israeli magazine *New Outlook* Simha Flapan has already begun a study of Israel and Palestinians since 1948. Jim Forest, the American head of the International Fellowship of Reconciliation and contributing editor to *Sojourner* magazine, as well as a number of Canadian and Egyptian academicians are also expected to attend the academy in the near future.

Norma Salameh, an Arab living in Canada, is scheduled to come to the academy to research Islam.

As to the role that the peace academy can play in the future, the new head said he would like it to demonstrate that "religion is more interested in peace than war."

Jerusalem Lecture Criticises Pro-Israeli Christian Politics

Some 50 Jerusalemites attended a lecture November 1 on "The Political and Social Deviation of Christianity," delivered by Reverend Naim Ateeq at the East Jerusalem YMCA.

Ateeq, the pastor of the Anglican Church in Haifa, spoke about what he considered the widespread misinterpretation of the Bible by pro-Israel Christians.

The lecture, part of a series sponsored by the Jerusalem Symposium was attended by leading Arab Christian businessmen, professionals and theologians. The Jerusalem Symposium was first established in 1972 by Christian Arab intellectuals and theologians.

Ateeq outlined the advent of the Christian groups who have traditionally supported Jews and Israel and have interpreted prophecy in a way as to fit their ideologies.

"With the advent of the state of Israel in 1948, these groups increased in numbers," said Ateeq. Ateeq talked about Christian eschatologist Hal Lindsey and his books on doomsday prophecies which have sold over 15 million copies. Ateeq scoffed at Lindsey's method forcing current political alliances to fit an interpretation of the end day prophecies.

'Whose Palestine?'

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briefly looks at the successive rulers of the land that lies between the River Jordan and the Mediterranean Sea. From the time of Abraham through the Jacobites, Melkites and Turks till present-day Israeli occupation, Chapman pursues answers to two basic questions: how long the Jews have been living in the land and how long the Arabs have been living here. After concluding that both sides can easily prove they have lived in the land for centuries before Christ, the real question for Chapman becomes simply how far we are to go back in history, since in every period different groups make greater claims.

So with history confusing in satisfying the questioners once and for all, Chapman turns to the present. He turns his title question into a court case and presents the arguments of all parties involved in the last two centuries. Chapman's witnesses describe the advent of Zionism and the European role in "anti semitism," the Jewish settlement of Palestine and the Arab reaction to it and the role of Britain, the US and the UN. He quotes Zionist leaders like Hertzl, Weizmann and Ben Gurion. He also quotes Palestinians like Najib Azuri, Tawfiq Zayyad, Kamal Nasser and Edward Said. His conclusion is that Zionist claims directly conflict with Palestinian desire for self-determination.

Chapman returns to the Bible for prophetic study in order to make a religious ruling on whose promised land it is. After a detailed discussion of God's original promises to Abraham about the land, Chapman concludes that the Bible has really no specific preference for one people or another. Chapman's argument is that most Old Testament promises were fulfilled either in Old Testament days or with the birth of Jesus. Jesus, says Chapman, was silent about the future of the land except for predicting the destruction of Jerusalem, which took place in AD70. The book's appendix on principles of prophetic interpretations deals more specifically with this problem.

Chapman still doesn't give up. He looks at the New Testament and the principles of Christianity. Chapman applies them to the bare facts on the ground today and tries to give guidance to Christians interested in the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. His conclusion is: don't accept one-sided versions. Search for the truth and fight against suffering, oppression and injustice.

Whose Promised Land? has come out at a time of renewed and increased efforts of fundamental Christians to blindly support Israel. Both Jerry Falwell and his American Moral Majority or the International Christian Embassy and its European counterparts are bent over backwards to give support for the Israeli state. The Christian Zionist support for Israel is not based on a love affair with Israel but is a result of misunderstanding and false interpretations of the Bible, specifically Old Testament prophecies.

Colin Chapman's book as an attack on blind Christian Zionism is weak, however, in some ways. His style is too didactic. All his chapters end in conclusions. And the book itself ends with Chapman's own answer to the book's title, written also in a didactic manner. The historical and present-day information is given in long direct quotations often boring the reader. Chapman's choice of personalities to relate historical events gives a somewhat more accurate tilt to the manuscript. However, his attempts at trying to be too objective become frustrating because they do not lead him to strongly state his opinion one way or the other.

Although Chapman's mixture of history and prophecy is necessary for the Christian reader, it may drive away non-religious readers. Nevertheless, for those still grappling with the question of 'whose promised land' it is, Chapman's text could be worthwhile reading.

Palestinian Economy Upset By Israel's Rescue Freeze

Maher AbuKhater looks at how Palestinians will be affected by Israel's emergency measures to save its own economy.

Once again one million plus Palestinians living under Israeli occupation have been left in the dark regarding issues pertaining to their livelihood. The Israeli government, represented by Finance Minister Yitzhak Moda'i and Trade and Industry Minister Ariel Sharon, signed November 3 an agreement with the Israeli labour federation *Histadrut* and Israeli manufacturers to freeze prices, wages and taxes for three months.

Palestinian traders and labour federations in the West Bank and Gaza were neither consulted nor informed of the development of the tripartite agreement. They were only told four days later, in a meeting between a representative of the trade and industry ministry and the West Bank Chambers of Commerce, that the agreement applies to the West Bank and Gaza as well.

The immediate result of the agreement was utter confusion not only in the uninformed Palestinian market but also in the better informed Israeli market. Several questions emerged as to what exactly the agreement called for and how it could be applied to those dealing in hard currency, such as Palestinian importers. Many of these questions remain unanswered now, some two weeks into the freeze. Only basic questions about prices of some regular market commodities have been answered.

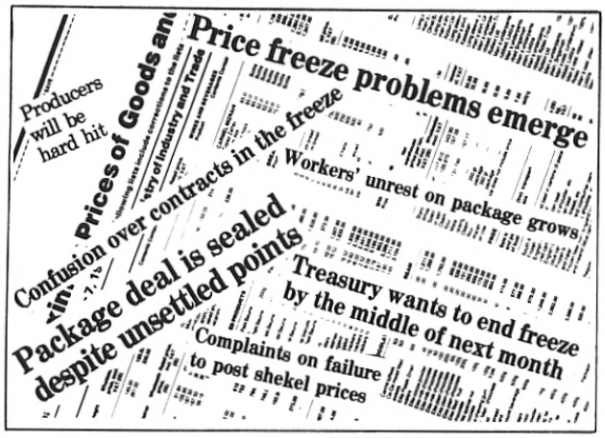
"All we know about the agreement is what we have read in the local press," said Fayeq Barakat, head of the Jerusalem Chamber of Commerce. "It will take a while before we can weigh its consequences or impact on the Palestinian market. But first we need to see the agreement and study it before we even know how to apply it," Barakat added.

No Profit Middlemen

Barakat confirmed that the hardest hit by the freeze are Palestinian wholesalers and workers. The wholesalers' profit margin is wiped out because they have no choice but to buy from Israeli importers at the freeze price and then sell to Palestinian retailers also at the frozen price, making them virtual 'agents' of the goods rather than full participants in the buy and sell market. Palestinian workers will also find soon that their salaries have depreciated in value as the shekel continues to drop while prices of basic goods, like agricultural products not included in the price freeze provisions, keep on increasing. Though other prices remain the same, workers' buying power will continue to be eroded because the shekel is dropping and the wages are not increased.

Barakat also predicted consumers will not benefit much from the freeze. Barakat said there are "loopholes" in the agreement which will mean continuous fluctuations of prices because the agreement is very broad and the government does not have the means to oversee its application. One Palestinian shopkeeper said the Israeli government is not concerned with what happens in the Arab market and therefore will not put any effort into watching for the raising of prices. He said Israel uses the unstable prices in the Arab market anyway as a propaganda tool to discredit the Palestinian market and discourage people from buying here.

The list of prices given by the government for frozen goods included prices noticeably higher than what they have been in the market. This is considered by some analysts as a last-minute price increase snuck in by the government. Some goods have been given a ceiling price of up to 40 percent higher than the market price. A Palestinian grocery store owner said the new list included the normal increases for the coming three months. Another said the whole thing is nothing more than a game.


Price freeze problems emerge
Prices of Goods and
Producers will be hard hit
Confusion over contracts in the freeze
Workers' unrest on package grows
Package deal is sealed despite unsettled points
Treasury wants to end freeze by the middle of next month
Complaints on failure to post shekel prices

Dinar Preference

In the West Bank where the Jordanian dinar, recognised by the Israeli military occupation as an official currency, is widely used particularly in large transactions, the price freeze has left traders unable to decide how to deal with it. The freeze also means consumers can refuse to pay in any currency other than the Israeli shekel, which continues to fall, as opposed to the dinar, which remains fairly stable. West Bank traders are heavily dependent on the Israeli market and therefore their transactions during the freeze period will be influenced by that market. But at the same time, buying and selling in the occupied territories is occasionally done in the dinar, even though the actual transaction is calculated in the shekel unless it is a big transaction.

As for property owners who are paid lease money in either dinars or US dollars based on the contract signed between the owner and tenant, probably nothing will affect this relationship. According to Ramallah Chamber of Commerce head Ibrahim Far, the tenant "has a moral obligation to abide by the terms of the contract he signed with the property owner" and therefore has to pay in dinars if the contract so states.

Palestinian importers are also confused about the new freeze. Like Israeli importers, the Palestinians pay for their merchandise with hard currency. With the price freeze, the rate of exchange for the US dollar will be held at IS527 for the three-month period and at IS1302 for the Jordanian dinar. But the official rate of exchange may change and importers will be locked into the freeze rate nevertheless.

3-Month No-Sale

Assuming the official exchange rate for the dollar, for instance, continues to climb, importers, therefore, will have to buy goods at costs higher than the freeze rate and still sell them at the frozen price. This means a big loss in revenues. One Jerusalem car dealer told *Al Fajr* they have been informed by major car importers there will be a moratorium on selling new cars to the public for three months. The dealer said what will actually happen is that car dealers will try to "obstruct" car sales for three months. This way they save themselves from revenue loss but stay operating within the law. This same tactic may eventually be used by all big importers in order to control any losses in profit.

Some merchants predict that the black market in both the Israeli and Palestinian economies will flourish during this period. They said those who need to buy merchandise badly will have to either pay the seller's price or wait till the freeze is over. Traders, particularly importers, may instead of selling at the frozen price offer to deal with wholesalers or retailers on a price agreeable to both, thus rendering their transactions basically "black market" and making the whole price freeze a joke.

This will cause, by the way, a drop in the level of consumer purchases, what the government hopes will happen. Israeli officials in the new national unity government have been talking about reducing the standard of living. By stopping the purchase of some items, especially luxury goods, in the regular market, the standard of living will come down and imports will also be cut, based on the demand of the local market. The recent ban on imports of some 50 goods, including cars and appliances as well as basic products, was intended to cut down on local demand.

Exports Encouraged

At the same time the government has been working towards tightening the country's belt it has been encouraging exports. The treasury recently was facing a depletion in foreign currency reserves, said to have dropped to more than half of the safe level of US$3 billion. As a result, and in order to bring this level to its normal position, Israel has asked the United States to give it the entire economic aid package, amounting to US$1.2 billion, in one lump sum rather than the usual quarterly payments. The US was more than generous by giving the aid as a grant.

US economic aid has still not been enough to make up the difference in the foreign currency reserves and therefore the new freeze measure was intended to help out. With the free trade agreement recently signed between the US and Israel in which Israel can export goods to the US without paying tariff, Israeli producers are being encouraged to sell outside in order to make up any possible losses in the local market due to the price freeze. Israel has a similar zero-tariff agreement with the European Economic Community. It is predicted, therefore, that manufacturers will concentrate more on exports than on producing for the local market. Some local economists believe this deal with the manufacturers is what made them agree to the freeze, otherwise they would be the hardest hit by the agreement. The export industry is still heavily subsidised by the government.

Workers Will Pay

The manufacturers, even though they will still be making profit by their overseas sales, also want more concessions from the Israeli market. This concession is to be made by the workers. The price freeze agreement includes an item calling for a freeze on workers' wages. This means not compensating workers for erosion in their salaries expected from inflation, which is predicted to continue to rise to the 1000 percent mark by the end of this year. Currently the inflation rate is around 800 percent.

The *Histadrut* representative, Yisrael Kessar, agreed to negotiate on compensating Israeli workers after the agreement is signed. Based on the agreement, workers' salaries will erode by a third in purchasing power during the three-month freeze period. The workers will continue, however, to receive cost-of-living increments in this period. The government is arguing that the recent economic measures are intended to cut the spiralling inflation which, if done, will not hurt the purchasing power of the workers. But, according to observers, Kessar did not seem to know that what he actually signed was an agreement to provide cheap labour to Israeli industry.

The exact impact of the price freeze cannot be measured for a while. Traders and consumers are still not sure how this freeze is going to benefit them. There is strong doubt it will help, as the government has tried many times in the past to rescue the dying Israeli economy but to no avail.